

Fig Leaves and Other Coverings

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Audio Transcripts of Sunday Sermons

Smashwords Edition

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Fig Leaves and Other Coverings (4 sermons)

The church of Jesus' day had the Bible, had the promises, had all kinds of things; but they did not have the heart of God for broken, damaged people.

Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan to actually confront what the church of His day was like. It was not connecting to those who were wounded, and desperately in need of healing.

Why is it we need to learn how to move in the spirit, and prophecy, and operate in the gifts of the spirit? So when we engage people in need, we have something to give to them. Why do you need to get trained, to flow in the gifts of the spirit, and the anointing of the Holy Ghost? So you have something to pour into people God is sending you to.

God is sending every believer, every believer, God sends us somewhere into this community to influence people; and to do it, you have to enter their world.

So what about these religious people? They had too many hang ups, and things in their life, and so they did not catch the heart of God. They actually hid away from being involved with the broken. They disconnected from the broken.

[Fig Leaves and Other Christian Coverings \(1 of 4\)](#) We're going to look at some stuff that stops us actually being authentic and moving forward. Your personal testimony of what God has done, and is doing, is going to impact the people around you. That's why it has to be fresh. You can't live out of something from yesterday. We have to be current with God. So if I asked you what has God done, or has been doing, you should be able to tell me something reasonably recently, and if you're going back three or four years, then it's time you got near to God again, and believe to see good things happening in your life

[Fig Leaves and Other Christian Coverings \(2 of 4\)](#) Weird things we do in church, that make us hard to relate to. If you're going to love anyone, you have to connect meaningfully with them. With God we grow and mature to have power and impact the community. We can all make a difference in someone's world.

[Fig Leaves and Other Christian Coverings \(3 of 4\)](#) God sees the heart that responds and work with it. Holy Spirit speaks to an open heart. We won't go forward if we don't grow. Be able to receive grace, don't beat yourself up. Ask God to help, guide, show you, and enable you to get up – have a heart good to God. Ask forgiveness, help – grace and goodness will come to the humble. You will then be able to show grace and minister to others, to enter other people's lives. We need to take responsibility to grow and change otherwise we don't have anything to give to other people. Authenticity with God is to be passionate and willing to grow. Don't stay where you are, step forward, move on, step up.

[Fig Leaves and Other Christian Coverings \(4 of 4\)](#) You're consumed with trying to control your world. To slow down means you have to say this: God is control, and I don't need to be in control of the world. It was here before I came. It'll be here after I leave, and I am not God, I don't have to be in charge - so I can stop. I can let God take care of the world, while I just connect with God.

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We're going to look at some stuff that stops us actually being authentic and moving forward. Your personal testimony of what God has done, and is doing, is going to impact the people around you. That's why it has to be fresh. You can't live out of something from yesterday. We have to be current with God. So if I asked you what has God done, or has been doing, you should be able to tell me something reasonably recently, and if you're going back three or four years, then it's time you got near to God again, and believe to see good things happening in your life

I want you to just open your Bibles with me in Luke, Chapter 10. I want to just talk over a couple of Sundays on Fig Leaves and Other Coverings, particularly Christian coverings. You can put the word 'Christian' if you like on the title, but we're going to look at some stuff that stops us actually being authentic and moving forward. Its ways that people carry on in church - you're aware that so often in the church, the condition of marriages is not a lot better than it is out in the world. There's something really wrong there, wouldn't you say?

So often people are struggling with the same message people in the world are struggling with, can't seem to get a breakthrough. That's not very helpful in terms of our witness, and so we want to look at two levels; firstly, where God wants to take us. We want to look also at removing some of the obstacles, and we're going to share a few things on that. Here's an interesting scripture in Luke Chapter 8, where Jesus had delivered this man who was totally demonised. His life was totally a mess. The man wanted to follow Him, and Jesus said this to him. He said: go to your home and testify the good things God has done for you. In other words, He said: the first thing I want you to do is, I want you to go into your home environment, and into that area where people know the kind of person you were, and let them know about how good God is, and let them see how your life has changed. Let them know it.

The Bible says that that region there was so oppressed by demonic powers, it implies it through the scriptures there, and the people so filled with fear, they actually asked Jesus to leave. Then when this man got testifying, it was so changed when Jesus came back, everyone wanted to hear him. One man - he's a Christian for one day, and his ministry overflows and impacts a whole region, and everyone turns around. How did he do it? It wasn't because of all his Bible knowledge. It wasn't because of a lot of things. It was because he had a testimony of a life experience with the Lord, that no one could challenge, and that became the weapon God opened up a whole area. So your personal testimony of what God has done, and is doing, is going to impact the people around you. That's why it has to be fresh. You can't live out of something from yesterday. We have to be current with God. So if I asked you what has God done, or has been doing, you should be able to tell me something reasonably recently, and if you're going back three or four years, then it's time you got near to God again, and believe to see good things happening in your life. Amen.

A couple of weeks ago we shared our own testimony, and shared on two key principles in our own testimony: the principle of honour; the principle of humility. When we shared just what God had done in our lives, there was hardly anyone that wasn't affected, because testimony has power to change you. We didn't share about all our successes. We just shared about where we were broken, and Jesus helped us. Not how good or how great or what giftings, or how much anointing or what experience. What we did was share about the goodness of God in people who've failed and broken lives. That is what touches hearts. It gives hope something could be different, so we're going to look in this parable. It's the parable of the Good Samaritan, and we'll get to the fig leaves part hopefully. This gives you the overall setting of where I believe God wants us to move, and why we need to address the things in our lives that stop us carrying the life of God, and the enthusiasm, the joy, and the passion of the Holy Ghost.

Let's have a look in Luke, Chapter 10. You know the story, and a lawyer had spoken to Jesus. He said to Him: well teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life? He asked him: what's in the law, what do you read? He said: you shall - now look at this - love the Lord your God with just your mind? No, he says: love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, all your mind, everything; and your neighbour as yourself! He said: you've done right, do this and live.

Now notice what Jesus identified was the primary thing above all things. Number one, this one, if you're doing this, you're doing okay. He says: love the Lord fervently, every part of you. Your mind has got to learn how to love the

Lord. Your emotions, love the Lord with your emotions; love the Lord with your body; love the Lord with your spirit; every part of us. We tend to re-read it. We read it like this: love the Lord with your spirit on Sunday. But that's not what it says. It tells us that the commandment is, the one commandment that sums the whole Bible up is: passionate love, wholehearted love, your heart, that's your emotions, your mind, your thoughts, your feelings, your body, your strength - passionately loving God. You can understand then, if there's no passionate expression in a service where God's people are gathered, there is something wrong! It's not fulfilling what Jesus said is the number one thing to do - to love Him.

We love Him because He first loved us, so we need to begin to experience His love, and as we experience His love, we allow His love to bring healing, restoration, change in life; and we express something. We must express something, and it's not just - notice Jesus didn't say it was all about God word. He said: it's also about touching people. Listen, loving people is the number one indicator of how you're doing with God. Now how mature you are, how really you've caught the heart of God, it must come into our interactions with people. Spirituality, without engaging people, does become totally disconnected, and irrelevant, and part of the problem. God calls us to engage Him, to have encounters and experiences with Him, and then to overflow with what we have to people, who desperately have need. Jesus made it very, very clear: God loves us passionately!

Now God is not some person up there who's heavy, and serious and grim, who's got a big stick, and He's looking at you. He's not like that. The Bible says: He rejoices over you with joy and rejoicing! God is passionate. We are made in His image and likeness. Jesus was a passionate person. You say: oh that's not me - well you're messed up. There's something wrong. You're missing out on life. You're missing out on something, because Jesus, we're designed by God to reflect what He's like. If you look at the life of Jesus, He was an amazing person. He represents fully what God is like, and He was very passionate. He rejoiced. That means He laughed, and celebrated, and rejoiced. He wept openly over the grief of His friends. He prayed, He prayed with strong crying, that's passionate, and with tears - that's emotion.

When He was facing oppression, and a struggle, and the greatest challenge of His life; going into the garden, knowing tomorrow He's going to die, He wanted friends to be with Him - and He was sad that they wouldn't stick with Him. Before He came into this experience, He wanted them to come with Him; He wanted friendship. We just don't see sometimes, how full of expression Jesus was. Kids loved Him. Kids like smiley faces. Anyone who knows kids - they like smiley faces. You've got a serious face, they don't respond. They just see - the body is saying it all - heavy face, keep away. Adults are pretty much the same aren't we? See, so God is full of expression. Look at the expression and everywhere you look, there's expression, so God wants us to have expression, learn to be able to do that.

Now as we read the story here, you're going to see where Jesus is now illustrating, what He's talking about. Now of course when we read this parable of the Good Samaritan, you're going to put yourself somewhere in that story you know. Even as I read it out, you're going to mentally put yourself somewhere. Now maybe you're the guy on the road beaten up and dying; I'm bleeding to death, someone help me or even notice me. Maybe you're thinking: oh, I'm a bit like the Good Samaritan you know? Every now and then I help people out, you know? But almost no one will say that they're the priest, or the Pharisee, or the Levite. We don't want to be that, yet more often than not we are. That's why He told the story; it's to talk about what loving God passionately, and loving your neighbour as yourself really looks like, okay? It's more than just being in a service, and being excited on Sunday.

He said a certain man - Verse 30 - went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down the road, and when he saw him, well he passed by on the other side. He's got to get to a prayer meeting you know. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the same place, he came and he looked - so they both looked, they both saw him, you see. And he passed by on the other side. He crossed over the other road, so he wouldn't have to go there; listen, I'm busy mate, I've got a meeting, I've got a Bible study to do, I've got my home group to get to. You just don't understand how busy I am, I've got to get to things! I'm sorry, you know? But a certain Samaritan - now Jesus is using the Samaritan. It illustrates, of course, Him. Samaritans were despised. The priest and the Levite were spiritual people supposedly. And he went to him, and he bandaged his wounds, pouring on the oil and the wine; he set him on his own animal, took him to an inn and took care of him.

The next day, when he departed, he took out some money, gave it to the innkeeper, and said to him: take care of him; whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you. Who do you think was the neighbour, to the one who fell among thieves? And he said: the one who showed mercy; and Jesus said: well go and do likewise. Remember the original question is: well who's my neighbour? Jesus reverses it, and said: listen, that commandment's not about finding who's your neighbour. That commandment is about BECOMING a neighbour! Turn to someone and

say: howdy neighbour! [Laughter] Okay, now you notice in the story here he talks about, he's trying to explain or bring a message out, to a certain kind of people. He's talking to church people here, not talking to the unsaved. He's talking to church people, about what true, mature spirituality looks like - and so there's a priest.

The priest was one who actually ministered in the presence of God; and you and I are all called to be priests to God. He was a Levite, a Levite served in the house of God; so a Levite was also a special person, set apart. You could say that the priest and the Levite could easily be us, because we're all called to be priests, and to minister to God, to worship Him, praise Him, be in His presence, experience Him, love Him. And the Levite, the Levite represents a person who was serving, or involved in serving. So no matter how spiritual you are, it fits almost everyone who is a believer here today; we're in the house of God, we're serving, we're worshipping, we're doing something today. Now it says there's certain things that they did. It says - you notice the things that they did. They looked, and they saw the guy, and they actually would not engage in helping him. This is the point Jesus is making.

Now if you have a look at those people, automatically in our heart we say: well I wouldn't be those people; I'm not like that. You know this is the kinds of things they did, let's tick them off: one, they knew the Bible and read the Bible, okay. Number two, they went to church regularly. They were actually really committed people, probably more committed than some here today; and third, they fasted - yhey fasted every week - more fasting than some people here do; so they were pretty good people weren't they aye? And what else did they do? Well they tithed. They tithed of everything, very diligent about their tithing, probably more diligent than some of us are, and so they did these things, and they actually had really good behaviour, so if you looked at them, well, they're all really well behaved church-going people, see?

Now here's the problem. Their spirituality didn't go into the heart, and didn't change the way they lived their life. In other words, they had their experiences, and their programs, and their things that they did on Sunday and through the week; but it never overflowed to what God intended. You've got to understand that when God created us, He had an intention. The first intention is that we be an ambassador, a child of God, one of His representatives, His family to represent Him in the earth. The second is, that out of that position, or relationship of friendship, sonship with God, we would then bring His life into the earth, and change the environment. Now what He's showing here is, here's some people who are caught up in church world, but there is no overflow to any person who's in need, no overflow! They are preoccupied and busy with church, and there is no overflow from their life to a genuine person in need, and this is what Jesus is really looking at.

Now what they did was their focus was spiritual matters; oh I need to pray; need to go to church, got a meeting to take; got a lot of things to do. They were absorbed in their own world, their religious world, their world of spiritual things, their world of church activities. Now it's great to be involved in church activities. I'm all in for building the house of God, but Jesus is trying to point something that's missing. He's not saying any of those things were wrong; the problem is, they didn't actually understand what the heart of God was. Notice, that in all of their spirituality, they avoided people in need. Notice both of them saw him, and one actually crossed the other side of the road, to avoid him. Now the last couple of weeks of course, we've been having a simple exercise just getting people to be friendly. What I've been watching is to see who avoids who. Come on - to see if people are actually avoiding talking to people; and if we are, we need to realise we're missing something.

We've come to church. We're all in the right environment, but something is missing at the core of understanding of the heart of God, and that reflects a change we need to address in our lives. Now you see on a Sunday, there'll be people come who are part of the family of God; you're regular here, you come in and you enjoy what God is doing. There's others who come, and they're visitors, they're enquiring, they're new people. My concern firstly, is for every new person, the stranger in our midst; and then I look and I see: is this in your heart to stretch across to them; and smile and say: hello, it's great to see you. Now we actually do extremely well as a church. I reports continually of how friendly we are, but when I look around I see there are numbers of people, who for whatever reason, you've chosen are not stepping up to engage people. This is the lesson Jesus is talking about. People are in need.

This guy here had started out on a journey. He represents anyone in life, and on the way the thieves, that's a picture of demonic powers, came and wounded him and stole what he had. So this is a picture of any person, who has started out in life and ended up in turmoil, pain, conflict, hurt, wounded, broken, and they're bleeding, and they're in need of someone to represent God and come to them. This is what we are called to do. We're called to first of all be in relationship with our Father; and as sons, represent His heart. That's why Jesus is bringing this parable out. The religious people proposed that they represented what God was on about, but in their activities, actually didn't carry His heart. That's what He's trying to show up, what loving God passionately, and loving your neighbour as yourself, is about. It's not saying: don't pray, don't read your Bible, don't come to church, don't tithe. It's not saying any of those things.

Jesus actually reinforced all of those things, but He said: they need to lead to carrying the life of God to people who are broken; and there's not one of us doesn't meet people like that. You cannot go through a week, without meeting someone who is on the side of the road broken, wounded, bleeding; and if you know what to look for, you can see it easily. It's everywhere, and you and I, are we so busy with our life that we can't engage these people; or have we got something of the heart of God, and we're just looking for the ones God has called us to minister to? That's where we're going to move in the coming year. We'll be actually equipping, and stirring, and mobilising the church, to begin to become aware of its responsibility in the community, its responsibility to bring the life of God to people.

I've just been so thrilled too just at the works of Celia and Sargin and others have done, just going out into - even just out into the show grounds and moving prophetically. They've actually brought God to people, and they wept when they felt God, but every one of us can do that. Every one of us can do it, in all kinds of different ways - so you notice that they were disconnected from people and opportunity. They actually didn't even see opportunity when it came. I mean there's the guy right there, lying there on the road, and they were disconnected from people, disconnected from opportunity, disconnected from the heart and the purpose of God. Not only that, it just revealed that they were broken people themselves. The biggest reason that we don't engage and get involved with people, is because we're afraid that we won't be able to cope with their problems, and cope with them; which means there are issues in our own life we need to sort through, so we can enter the world of another, and not be overwhelmed by their needs, and just be able to just say: no, that's yours. This is how much I help.

You see the principles of this beautifully in the story of the Good Samaritan. It's absolutely amazing how it's done, but the thing is these guys had missed their purpose. They'd missed the divine design, and that's the issue that God is speaking to the church about, worldwide at the moment, in different ways. You'll hear it in all kinds of different ways, different language, different terminology; but in the end, it's the same thing. It's the church arising, and beginning to enter and engage the community, with the power and the presence of God; and to do that we've got to get honest about where we're really at, in terms of our equipping to do it, relationally and spiritually. Notice what this man did, the Samaritan. I love this guy here. Now these guys were religious people, but this guy here demonstrated really what the heart of God is, so we'll look at this, here it is. Notice the first thing he said: a certain Samaritan. Now a certain Samaritan came where he was, and he saw him, and he had compassion. He felt something, when he saw a person in need.

Now if you lack compassion, ask the Lord to give it to you, ask the Lord. Begin to pray: God, give me compassion, help me to feel the struggles of people, and equip me to be able to minister to them. I can't deliver every demon out of the people in this city - you've got to do it. Think about it. The next thing he did - so the first thing was, a feeling thing. Notice the other guys had no feeling at all. They looked, and they saw, and said: it's not my issue, keep out of my life. Now that's actually a culture that's come through the western world: don't get involved. We've got to change that. That's not - we're not called to represent that culture. We're called to bring the culture of God. The culture of God is get engaged, get involved where He leads you - not everything, you can't meet every need. You've got to know your limits, and that's part of what we'll talk about as well.

So here's what he did. He felt something, and then he initiated connection. Now people don't turn up. I don't sit in an office waiting for people to come to me. I've got more people who want to come to me than you could ever imagine, but they can't all come to me. Usually I've initiated contact in some way. The majority of people I get to minister to, I initiate the contact with. You've got to learn to be an initiator, to actually: here I am Lord; now I can't meet every need. I'm not even going to try to meet every need, but there's something I can do today to help someone, and I'm going to do it - it may even just be a smile, whole heaps of ways we can do it. We need to learn some of those ways, and whatever level we're at, we can all get engaged, you can all initiate connection with someone who is hurt. Now that means - it may just mean getting up out of your seat, going to someone who's sitting on their own, say: hi, how you doing? Can I just talk - can I buy you a cup of coffee afterwards? That is what this is about, initiating connection.

Here's the next thing he did, he went to him, and then he identified where he was broken. Now that takes a bit more skill. We need to learn some skills how to do that, but he basically - he had to go there, and he had to look at the guy, and find out where he was bleeding. Now he didn't sort of stand away - ooh, I wonder where he's bleeding. He actually went there, and inspected him and checked him out, and found out where he was hurting and in pain. Now you have to do that by being able to be a good listener, and a good talker, and you can grow in that area, but most people if you listen to them, will open up and tell you where they're hurt, if you really care about them. Then the next thing - I love this bit - he said: he poured in the oil and the wine. Now the oil and the wine always in the Bible speak of the ministry of the Holy Ghost. Now remember this is what true love is about. It's not just doing practical things to help people; it's actually carrying the anointing of God, and having something supernatural to put in someone's life.

To have that oil and wine, he must have brought it. He must have paid a price, to have the anointing of the Holy Ghost at work in his life; so when he went to people, when he found out the needs, when he saw what the problem was, he had something he could put in. He had that anointing of the Holy Ghost, a word of comfort, a word of encouragement, deliverance, healing, ministry of some kind. Every one of us, you've got the Holy Ghost to do that work, and if you don't know what to do, commit in the coming year - get trained. Get trained! Learn how to bring God to people, and also be willing to face what stops you going to people and engaging them. That's an internal thing. The other's easy to learn, and it's a part of a lifestyle. This is what Jesus talked about, this is it, this is the thing see? Notice here, poured in the oil and wine. Now I love that part, because that's all the apostolic commission. That is all about the apostolic commission: go into the world, as a sent person, sent by God.

If you start to think: where I live, where I work, where I go to school - that is where God sent me. I am apostolically commissioned to go there, and to discover those that God called me to minister to; and then to engage them, by initiating the connection, find out where the needs are, and bring something of God to them. Every believer is called to do that. You cannot hide in a prayer meeting, and fulfil the call of God. The prayer meeting, we engage God, we build with Him, we draw from Him, we experience Him. Then we fulfil the great commission, by going and touching people with what we've experienced. We've got to learn how to do that - so that's the apostolic commission. Now the second part, is in here as well, is the area of pastoral care and discipleship. Now here's the thing that's interesting. The guy knew his limits. He knew he could not do it all himself; and one of the great skills you've got to learn, is where your limits are. You can't do it all yourself, and neither does God expect you to. We've got at times learn to draw lines, and say: no more; even if people want more.

There's others can carry it on, so what he did was the next thing you see, the pastoral care and discipleship. He took him to the Inn. The inn, in the Bible here, is a picture of the local church, a community of believers. He took him to a place, and connected him with other people who could help him. You don't have to have all the answers, you've just got to be willing to have a good feeling for people, and when you see them in need, go to them, and do what you can. Then attract them to where someone else can carry on the job. Notice the next thing he did; he provided resources to ensure that the man's recovery took place; and then he checked up, and followed him up, to see how it was. Now Jesus said that's what loving God with all your heart, and loving your neighbour as yourself, is all about. It actually is revealed, not in the Bible school, not in the worship service, not in any of these things. It is revealed in the way you connect with, and touch the lives, of people.

Now it doesn't mean that the others aren't important. They are vitally important. Is it important to pray? Yes. Is it important to worship? Yes. Is it important to engage God? Of course, this is where the source is. But if you access the source, and never fulfil the purpose, you've frustrated the plan of God. He said in Acts 1 verse 8: you shall receive glorious power from on high; visions, dreams, revelations, prophecies, all kinds of wonderful things! And you can just wallow in them, enjoy them like a pig in a hollow. [Laughter] He didn't say that, did He? He said: no, you get them; and He said: then that's what equips you, to go to Jerusalem, the local town where you live, Judea, all around us in the Bay and in Samaria and beyond, everywhere. He said: that is the purpose of the Holy Ghost! It's given to you, to get you out there, so you can be a representative of God, and minister God to people! That's what it's about.

It's not about meetings. Meetings are about encouragement, engaging God, being built up, but actually our life call is about engaging God, allowing Him to shape us, so we can represent Him in the community; and you know what He is like? He even left heaven, and came to a grubby, dirty, sinful world, and engaged it. Does that cost you something? It sure does. Does that hurt you a bit? Ooh ooh, just look at the nail prints! Do people like you for it? Not always! Is it messy? Incredibly! Do you have times when people let you down? Just believe that! That's why the Holy Ghost is given to you, so you can be healed of your hurts, and carry on with the fire of God, and minister to people.

That's what Jesus said this is about. That is the church He's building. That's what He had in mind, a spirit filled, Holy Ghost, blood clean, people who are passionate for God, expressive of God, and not ashamed to tell God they love Him, and encounter Him, and spend time in His presence! But then when they get out of the meeting, they're in the mission field, and they're ambassadors. They're apostolic company of people, anointed by the Holy Ghost, and they've got some changing to do around them, got a mandate to shift something. The trouble is, years ago the church got into a rapture doctrine, and most Christians are waiting for Jesus to come, and hoist them out of it. It's all a lie. He's called you to get into it, and mess in with it, get rolling around in it; and do you get hurt? Yeah, you'll get a bit hurt! Have a look around, it's the history of the church, gets hurt - doesn't it? Have a look how it started. Have a look at the founder - but that's what we're called to do.

We're called to carry a glorious mission, to live out a great cause, that our community would change, that the people around us would be impacted by Jesus Christ, that God's power from heaven would come into the earth, passivity would be overcome, that negativity would be overcome, apathy overcome, sickness overcome, oppression

overcome. Something changing, because God's people woke up to why He put them on the earth! [Applause] And said: yes Lord, I will be like the Good Samaritan. I'll pay the price for the wine and the oil. I'll pay the price, to get my life touched and experience You, and then look out world! I'm just waiting for someone to pour the oil and the wine into! That's the shift God is making worldwide. It's always been what He intended, it's just sometimes we get caught up in all kinds of other stuff. Let's keep the main thing, the main thing: engaging God, and bringing God to people, and seeing their lives changed.

Will you be part of that? You better believe it. That's where we're going, that's where God is leading His church, worldwide. It's not just what we're doing here; it's where God is leading His church world wide! World wide! This gospel, this great news of Jesus Christ, and the kingdom of God and the power of God; it must, it MUST be proclaimed, to all the ends of the earth! It must be! Will you be part of that? Will you prepare yourself? Will you break out of whatever restricts you? If you can't go to people, ask God: what is wrong with me, help me to break out of it. Get into some course and get delivered or healed; learn some relationship skills; learn how to get the anointing of God to flow through you; and then go for it and make a difference! Go for it and make a difference!

Oh I tell you something, there's no limits to the person that says: I am here for a purpose, to reach the world for Christ, to make disciples of Jesus Christ, and advance the kingdom of our glorious God and Saviour. Can you say Amen to that? Let's stand and give the Lord a great clap. Come on, let's stand and give Him a great clap [applause] halleluiah! This is our destiny! This is what we are called to do! This is the church of the living God! Sons and daughters, carrying the heart of God, and the capacity to minister the life of God to people. My goodness, come on church, let's clap, let's rise and shake the dust off us. Stand up on the inside, begin to believe I can make a difference! My life will make a difference! I no longer live in that place down there. I'll stand and fulfil my destiny!

Summary Notes

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1. Introduction:

- Luke 10 – The region was oppressed by demonic powers, they asked Jesus to leave.
- One man, a Christian for one day, testified of the life experience with God and how this impacted the people of that region.
- Draw near to God to see good things for testimony. Testimony has the power to change us, to share about the goodness of God. It gives hope to something that is different.
- Luke 8:39-40 - “Return to your house (home) and tell (testify) what great things God has done for you!”
- The Power of Testimony – Telling others of your experience of the Goodness of God.
- A whole city was impacted – not by preaching but by the testimony of a changed life.
- Our Personal Testimony:
 - i) Humility – openness about our failures, struggles, pain, freed others to admit them.
 - ii) Honor – acknowledging the Goodness of God brought hope to others.
- Sin always has consequences – bad choices have bad consequences.
- Forgiveness removes the guilt and establishes the connection with God but a person will still experience the consequences.
- Christians have the tendency to cover their struggles and remain broken and alone.

2. The Great Commandment - Fervent love:

- Luke 10:27 - “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself”.
- The priority of fervent loving relationships is declared by Jesus.
- We are human beings created to reflect and carry the image of God.
- God loves passionately – He is expressive.
- How we express something in connecting/loving people is the number one indicator of how our relationship with God is.
- Spirituality without God = disconnected with people.
- He rejoices over you, He is a passionate God.
- We are designed by God to reflect what He is like – He is full of expression.
- Jesus is full of expression e.g. prayed in the garden, strong tears flowed and He wanted friendship.

a) The Religious Spirit is devoid of Compassion:

- The parable of the Good Samaritan – verse 30 – 37.
- The wounded man represents any person in life.
- Priests and Levites represent religious people.

Priest = we're all called to be priests, to minister, to praise, experience and love.

Levites = served in the house of God as we serve in the house of God.

⇒ They knew the Bible, fasted, go to church, they tithe, have good behaviour. Good behaved spiritual church people – but it never overflowed to what God intended - it didn't flow through their hearts. They are so caught up in church flow that there is no overflow to other people in need, they cross to the other side of the road. Don't want to get involved. In their activities they didn't represent God.

- Religious People – supposed to be Godly representatives:
 - Focused on spiritual matters.
 - Self absorbed in their own life.
 - Avoided people in need.

- Disconnected from people and opportunity.
- Revealed their own brokenness covered in spiritual fig leaves.
- Had no concept of Divine Design to be God's ambassadors.
- 1 John 3:14-18
- Becoming a neighbor is not just to love a neighbor.
- Samaritans were despised by people.
- Carry the life of God to people who needs it. Are we too busy to see those people? It is our responsibility to bring the heart of God to people.
- The Priest and Levite missed an opportunity. They missed what God wanted to do. They have issues in their own lives they have to deal with. They missed their divine design.

b) True religion/Spirituality is revealed by Relationships with People:

- The Good Samaritans' actions revealed his spiritual maturity.
- Compassion, ask God for it.
- Feeling, Initiated connection. Apostolic Commission
- Identified the man's brokenness, he (Reaching out to the Lost) went there and inspected. Good listener and good talker.
- Poured in oil and wine, carried anointing of God, something supernatural given to others, anointing of the Holy Spirit. Pastoral care/Discipleship
- Took him to an Inn. (Healing and Restoration)
- Provided for his ongoing healing.
- Recognized healing is a process.
- Embraced the need for others to help.
- It's for the Church to arise and enter to engage the community to equip and connect relationally.
- Go into the world as a sent person - wherever you go. Every believer is called to do this.
- So often people are part of a Church body but are unable to heal others because their own lives are broken and they won't admit it.
- So often there is a gap between beliefs and experience (how to live life)
- Pastoral care and discipleship, he knew his limits. (Can't do it all yourself). He took him to an Inn, (Church) – where someone else can do the job. He also provided resources.
- To access the source and never give out leads to frustration.
- Acts 1:8
- Engage God, allow Him to shape us and give back to others. It comes at a cost.
- The Holy Spirit is given to us and heals us when things go wrong. We will get hurt, won't be liked, it won't always be fun, it will get messy, it comes at a cost like the oil and wine came at a cost to the Samaritan.
- We are called to carry a Glorious Mission, people around us impacted by Jesus and to see how their lives change.
- It must be proclaimed in the entire world. Will you be part of it?
- Learn and build yourself – go for it and make a difference.

Fig Leaves and Other Christian Coverings (2 of 4)

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Weird things we do in church, that make us hard to relate to. If you're going to love anyone, you have to connect meaningfully with them. With God we grow and mature to have power and impact the community. We can all make a difference in someone's world.

I want you to open your bible with me in Luke 10, and I started a message, didn't get very far on it, but we'll see if we can do a bit better today, and we're looking at Fig Leaves and Other Christian Coverings. Weird things we do in church, that make us hard to relate to. We're just going to read in Luke Chapter 10, and Jesus has been asked a question: what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said: well what do you reckon the Bible says? He said: you shall love the Lord your God - Verse 27 - with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself - and Jesus said: you've got it, you've got it. You shall love the Lord with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul, all your strength. In other words, that is a passionate, expressive, dynamic relationship with God; and He says: it doesn't finish there. You love your neighbour as yourself. It's one big package. Its one big package; loving God fervently, passionately, and then overflowing to express that, and represent what God is like to people.

This is the core of it. Now listen, notice this, that if you're going to love anyone, you have to connect meaningfully with them, so if we're going to love God passionately we must establish a connection, a vital connection with Him, a prayer life, an act of faith, believing, reaching up to Him, talking to Him, listening to Him. If we're going to love our neighbour as ourselves, we need to actually connect with what's going on in our life. A lot of people are unable to love, and express love well to people, and help people and enter their life, because they themselves have got too much junk, too much unresolved stuff, and God is wanting us to get cleaned up, not just so we can be better people, but so we can have greater impact in the lives of others. He said: love your neighbour - you can't love your neighbour unless you connect with them, by entering their world. If we're going to fulfil what Jesus said is the great command, where everything in the Bible is summed up, and we're going to love Him passionately and then begin to love people, we have to learn how to connect into their world, how to reach out to them.

That's why Jesus told the story, to illustrate what He meant. You know the story of the Good Samaritan, I'm not going to go through it all. I just want to pick up one verse in it. I think its Verse 27. It says: because the religious man, the priest, had gone by; saw the man in need, desperately wounded, desperately broken. He looked, and he was aware there was a problem, but he would not get involved. The Levite, he also went by, came over and looked at the man, saw him, crossed the other side and would not get involved. Now Jesus is trying to speak to the church of His day, in the same way He's trying to speak to the church of today; that not getting involved is not an option. You notice what He says, He talks then about the Good Samaritan. The Samaritans were despised. He's painting a picture of himself, as the one who was despised. He was despised, because he connected with people, connected with sinners, connected with tax collectors, connected with prostitutes, he connected with broken people, and his critic's main criticism was: he hangs out with the wrong kinds of people.

For most Christians, it won't be said of you that that was true. It's true, because once you've been in church for a little while, you begin to forget the lost, begin to forget the people who God has sent us to reach out to. Jesus then talked about this man, and it says this. I won't take it any further than this, then I want to go into Genesis 3 - and notice what the man did. It says: he saw him, his heart was touched and moved. Here is a man who has the heart of God. The heart of God is for people. God loves people, He loves the world, He loves Hastings, loves Napier. There may be many things wrong, but God still loves the people that live here; and this man was moved by the plight of the man, went to him, and entered his world, found out what was wrong, and did what he could to minister to him. Listen, Jesus told this, to illustrate that this is what the heart of God is like. This is what spiritual maturity looks like.

Spiritual maturity looks like: going to people, and bringing the love, and the compassion, and the anointing of the Holy Ghost; and pouring it into their lives. That's what spiritual maturity looks like. It doesn't look like: you prophecy well. It doesn't look like: you do all kinds of church things well, that's family business, but it looks like: you go to people, and you help people who desperately need help. That's what spiritual maturity looks like. That's what the heart of God looks like. That's why Jesus told this story. I just kind of feel to hang out in this story of the Good Samaritan, I'm just getting so much from it. So what about these two - the priest and the Levite? Well they were the church of the day, and the church of the day walked past the broken, the needy and the wounded; and would not cross over, and be engaged in being part of the solution.

The church of Jesus' day had the Bible, had the promises, had all kinds of things; but they did not have the heart of God for broken, damaged people; and so Jesus told the story, to actually confront what the church of His day was like. It was not connecting to those who were wounded, and desperately in need of healing. Why is it we need to learn how to move in the spirit, and prophecy, and operate in the gifts of the spirit? So when we engage people in need, we have something to give to them. Why do you need to get trained, to flow in the gifts of the spirit, and the anointing of the Holy Ghost? So you have something to pour into people God is sending you to. God is sending every believer, every believer, God sends us somewhere into this community to influence people; and to do it, you have to enter their world. So what about these religious people? They had too many hang ups, and things in their life, and so they did not catch the heart of God.

They actually hid away from being involved with the broken. They disconnected from the broken, and I want to just touch on that for a couple of weeks; and we're going to go into Genesis, Chapter 3, and pick up this whole theme of fig leaves. I want you to see something about the fall; Genesis, Chapter 3, Verse 7. After Adam and Eve had sinned - before they sinned, they were able to relate freely one to another; then the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and so they did something. They sewed fig leaves together, and covered themselves up. They became conscious of something. They became conscious of themselves. There was no self-consciousness before then, no shyness before then, no bad relationships before then. They covered themselves with fig leaves, then they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden, in the cool of the day, and they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God.

Now I want you to see two things in there; number one is, they put on fig leaves. In other words, they covered up what they were truly like. They covered themselves, and withdrew from intimate connection, or heart connection, one with another. A consequence of the fall, is a struggle we have in being genuine and authentic, and connecting with people just as we are. We tend to want to cover ourselves up, put on a good front, an image - but God is not interested in image. He's not interested in fig leaves. He is wanting you to be authentic. He has a provision for you, where you don't have to cover up your life, you can live an authentic life, and authentic people are able to connect with others. People who are covered up, and all of their life is damaged, broken and they're living with most of their life covered, cannot enter into close relationships. Notice the second thing they did, they hid. They avoided connecting. When God came, they avoided connecting, so what they did was, they constructed a world in which they could control their connections.

They began to control how closely they got to one another. They began to control how closely they got to God. They tried to control their world, and avoid getting near to anyone. Now here's the problem: when we cover ourselves up, and draw back from intimately connecting, to save ourself and control our world from being hurt any further, this is what happens - you become lonely! Church is full of lonely people, and if you're lonely, the problem's right within you, and the answer's right within you too. It's not about anyone organising something for you. The problem lies within us, because of what we have put to cover ourselves from living authentic relationships. The fig leaves, I'm going to try and identify some things that we do. We do some stuff in church. Every church does it. You'll probably recognise some of these, you might like to tick a bit off, and then you can actually say: well Lord, perhaps I can abandon my fig leaf, because the problem - you see God wants to make a provision for you.

God is a Jehovah Jireh, the Lord our provider. God makes provision for our lives to be restored, and made whole. There's only one uncomfortable hitch, that is you've got to take off the fig leaf first. Ooh, is there any other way? No. Oh anything but that! Anything but letting people know, or letting God know, what I'm really like, see? But God wants us to be authentic. He's not worried about mistakes, failures, things you've done wrong, anything that's going wrong. He's not worried about bad attitudes. He's not worried about any of that kind of stuff to tell the truth. The devil just leaps on your back and accuses you, and makes you think God's upset with you - He isn't. He loves you. He loves you, and while you're a sinner, He sent Jesus to die on the cross. How much more, when anything you need now, He'll provide; but you see Adam believed a lie. He thought God was going to hurt him, so he hid from God. Now how can we actually invade the world, if we're hiding from God, and hiding from one another? How can you fulfil your mandate in the world, if you're life is covered/concealed, you're hiding your life, and you're not free on the inside? How can you do it?

Well you'll try to do something, but it won't ring authentic, and people are looking for authentic. People need to see authentic. Authentic doesn't mean perfect. Authentic means: you blow it once in a while, but you know what to do when you blow it, you know how to be upfront and talk about it and put it right, say: I'm sorry. That's a good word: I am sorry. They're hard words to say those ones. You'd be surprised how hard it is to get it out of people, they choke rather than say it, but it actually helps. It's very helpful. Okay then, so they became isolated, alright. So now notice the difference now with the Good Samaritan. The religious people wouldn't engage the man's world, the Good Samaritan did; and this is what Jesus is pointing out, that when we become connected to Him, He begins to grow us and change us and help us mature, and the evidence of maturity is our capacity to enter the world of those who are lost and broken, to help them and love them.

Will that hurt? Too right it'll hurt. Will you get knocked back? Too right you'll get knocked back. Will people misunderstand - oh yes, they will, but aren't we called to follow Jesus Christ, not the Pharisees? We're called to be like the Good Samaritan, not like the ones who crossed the road. How many have crossed the road, come on? Yeah, we've all done it some time, crossed the road. Sometimes I've crossed the road when I saw some Christians. [Laughter] They were that bad. I'd prefer not to talk to them, because they were so weird. [Laughter] They were. You don't know how weird it was, when they first arrived here man, there was some shocking stuff going on downtown - weirdness plus. I can remember someone standing up preaching the gospel, and I thought that's great, I'll go and talk to him. He didn't want to talk to me. What kind of weirdness is that?

Then some others were there, blowing trumpets, doing some weird stuff, and I crossed the road. They were an embarrassment to everyone, caused most of the preaching of the gospel out in the street to stop - it was such an offence. That's not how you win the world - to win people, you've got to be wise. To win people, you've got to be wise. You've got to allow God to work in your life, and develop authenticity, so that you can enter the world of others; and not put them off by religion, not put them off by weirdness, but actually engage them, so they see you have something they really want.

So we've got some amazing things we do in the church, so let me just throw a few things out, because if we're going to become whole, it helps if we actually see what it is we do that covers up our life. A lot of Christians, we substitute activities, we substitute activities for authentic relationship. We just get busy doing stuff, and so we do church stuff, and now we feel real good, because we're doing stuff for God. Well it's right to serve the Lord, it's right to do things for God, but God wants an authentic relationship first. He puts relationship over doing.

Doing flows out of relationship, so some people do stuff, and in church we've got a whole range of weirdness of our own. You can't believe it. When you hear some people talk, you haven't got a clue what they're talking about. It's very spiritual. [Laughter] Too spiritual for me, I can't understand. Neither can anyone else, so how does that help anyone? It doesn't, it's just a fig leaf, over someone who's broken on the inside. It doesn't help, and so church is full of these kinds of things that we do. We get very, very busy, and serve, serve, serve, served and help and that's right to do serving and helping, but we don't neglect our relationship with the Lord. Other times we have, kind of like, God

talk, you know? After you've done the God talk stuff, people think: whoa, I don't know much, I don't know anything. So think about that; if people walk away from your God talk, and they feel that they actually don't know anything, or nothing much, you're projecting pride and ego, and they're feeling put down. This is not good. This is not the way to win the world! This is the way to weirdness.

It actually totally removes you from the heart of God; so we have to look, and guard, that how we talk, how we connect, how we communicate, what we do with one another, actually genuinely and authentically connects with people. Ooh, you know it's the other one beside you isn't it aye? Of course exaggerating what we've had - now experiences in God are necessary. We can only share with people what we have experienced. We have to have revelation of God. We must have experience of God, but our experience of God is to lead us to represent Him, not to make us look important. It's so very, very modest - and then of course the other thing we do in church is, we just apply bits of the Bible we like, so we don't do the other stuff. Now I'm really going to hammer this one on the Good Samaritan, because I know this is one people don't like. See, we like to go to church, and do the ministry, but actually ministry is about serving people. It's kind of like this: what can I do to help you?

It's not complicated. You don't have to be rocket scientists to help people, but you do actually have to be authentic, and have some skills to enter their world. If we're broken, and we don't have the skills, our impact is limited; so why do you need to grow as a Christian? Why do you need to develop? Why do you need to grow? Here's the reason why: so you can enter into deeper relationship with the Lord, and you can represent Him better to people, and have greater impact with people. So if your life is broken, and the only people you can connect with are Christians, you should do something about it, because you're sidelined and irrelevant, irrelevant to what God is up to. Come on, think about it. That's what the Pharisees and religious world were like in Jesus' day, irrelevant to the nation of their day, and Jesus showed what a man full of the Holy Ghost does. He gets involved with people that people don't like, and get upset about, and He ministers to them, and upsets them as well, all kinds of stuff.

Here's another little thing we do in church. We divide our life up into natural and spiritual. How we've got an amazing ability to do that; this is this compartment, that's the God bit, so Sunday's the God bit. The rest of the week, well I've got to go out there - so we come in on Sunday, and we say: oh, oh! Thank You Lord for Your wonderful love! And on the way home we're cursing someone who cut us off. [Laughter] What's all that about? When we come in, oh praise the Lord! All I have, I surrender all! Then during the week we're trying to rip everyone off, and we're just as sharky in business as anyone else - no difference, see? Or we come and we say: oh Lord, I love You, and then we go home and berate the husband for his weakness, [laughter] and we're convinced we're doing God a favour. It doesn't work. It doesn't work, and so that's dividing your life up.

Listen, God wants to come to every part of our life. You say: well listen, if you're going to survive in the business world, you've got to be tough. Is that right? How are you doing then? You see, one thing that's happening in the world now, is the world's getting a great lesson on how greed and corruption actually doesn't work, inherently doesn't work! But integrity, and service, it does. Think about that. See the principles of God work. The problem is, we've got to learn how to live in a world culture, and be able to represent God's values in there, without being religious; and one of the values of the kingdom is service, excellent service, see? Think about this, so when we divide our life up, and we keep God for Sunday, but the rest of the week it's kind of we've just got to get on as usual; listen, that's one of the clever coverings we make for the fact to hide, we are not authentic, and we are irrelevant.

For the church to have impact, it must actually break through these mentalities, put off these coverings, and find ways to actually connect into and touch the community we live in. That's what the Good Samaritan did. He had the oil and the wine, yeah you can have the oil and the wine, but if you can't talk to people, they're not going to want your oil and wine. You've got to find ways to bridge into their world, and enter their world, find ways of serving them and help them. Man, I was impressed this last week. They had these t-shirts - you ever seen that thing iPhone and it's got an 'i' with a big dot on it, phone afterwards or they've got 'i' and it's information. They had 'i' serve. Well that's good, wasn't it aye? In case you didn't understand what that meant, on the back they had 'can I help you?' [Laughter] Okay, because we don't always get it, do we aye?

Okay, here's another thing people do in churches - we hide our emotions, hide our emotions. I get really excited, I cry in church, I cry when I'm in the presence of the Lord, I get excited when I'm in the presence of Lord, want to dance when I'm in the presence of the Lord! [Laughter] And if I can't dance, I feel a bit - that wasn't a very good service, didn't sort of get happy and expressive. So part of the problem is, we don't understand that our emotions and feelings, they are part of how God has designed you. He's made you to be a feeling person, made you to be an emotional person. You were created in the image of God, who has feelings. He gets angry, He is loving, He has compassion, He has mercy, He has joy, He dances, He's got all of these emotions, and He gives them to us as well.

So we need to know what to do with the emotions, how can you love the Lord with all your soul, if you don't include your emotions?

You try and love your wife passionately: I love you. [Laughs] There's something wrong with that picture. The words sound okay, but it's more should be like the Italians: ooh I looove you! You know? Now that's more like it, now we've got the expression, and the warmth, and the hands, and whoa! Yay! Now that looks more real! So emotions are part of what God has given to us. In John 11:35, Jesus wept. He openly expressed His emotions, He cried, He rejoiced, He was angry, He was stirred, He was grieved, He had all kinds of emotions. He was lonely. [Laughs] He was burdened. He had many emotional experiences, and we have them too. If you're a human being, you will have all of those things. You will have sadness and happiness, you will have times when you're puzzled, disturbed, lost, don't seem to know where to go, feel heavy, struggling. This is being a human! But sometimes we think when we get into church that all that will just change, and so we get into a church culture and then, well we're not authentic anymore, because now we're trying... Well praise the Lord brother, praise the Lord, ra-ra-ra! All going well - and you know that life's falling apart, absolute mess.

We just bury all the grief, bury all the feelings, and try and control the emotions. Well when you do that, you dishonour yourself, because God gave these things to you. Now we're not to be controlled by our emotions, or led by our emotions; we're to be led by the spirit of God. But to be authentic in your relationship with God, you must identify what you feel, because it tells what's going on in your heart, and if you're going to talk with God, you've got to talk from your heart; I feel Lord, I'm struggling with this, Lord I'm afraid. Lord, I just am so sad, I feel overwhelmed by this thing. We've got to learn to be authentic with God, authentic with Him. David was like that, poured his soul out; when I remember these things, I pour out my soul, and there was a weeping as he talked about the reality of his life, and he just expressed it passionately to the Lord. After he's expressed his emotions, he was then able to stir faith; but if you don't express your emotions, it's very hard to access what's going on inside your life.

So often in church, people control emotions, shut things down; oh, you shouldn't feel like that! Oh, shouldn't I? I guess not. Inside, I feel very angry - well you shouldn't feel angry! Well the Bible doesn't say that; the Bible says: be angry, but don't sin; but it's translated: you shouldn't feel like that. Well I'm sorry, but I do, I feel really ticked off, and I don't mind telling you. You understand? Now that's more authentic than saying: oh praise the Lord brother! [Laughter] Going home, you know, like cats when you annoy them. [hiss] Like that. That's what some people are like on the inside, a lot of the time, because they don't know what to do with their emotions. Can I tell you I'm angry? Can I tell you I'm really depressed? I'm not sure, so I'll hide it. Can you understand? So it requires an environment where it's okay to be human, it's okay to be human, human being, not a human doing, a human being, have feelings.

So you see me up here, so it's like praise the Lord, ra-ra. You don't see me other days! But there's emotions and feelings, and things that are poured out to God, and struggles, and trying to work out what to do, trying to listen for the voice of God, when there's so many other voices. This is reality of life, so if we're going to be authentic it doesn't mean you're a perfect parent, it doesn't mean you're a perfect husband. In fact I've known people who were attracted to the faith in a Christian couple, because they saw them have an argument, and they saw them make it up. They said I want some of that, because that, that is accessible to me. But being a perfect little Christian, that's just - ooh you're weird, I can't relate to that at all. You understand? That was the problem with the Pharisees.

They were sort of perfect, dressed right, went to the right places, spoke right, paid tithes, prayed, did blah blah blah blah, but Jesus said: oh you're like a painted tomb, there's bones on the inside, corrupt all the way right through to the core! Nothing authentic, see? So God wants you to be authentic. To be authentic, well there are some days: WHERE IS GOD! Some days you're struggling. Some days you're doing well - that's actually what the Christian life is like; but in the middle of it, we can express our feelings, our struggles, our concerns to God. We hear the voice of our heart. We begin to understand our beliefs and what's happening. We can begin to receive encouragement from the Lord. He desires truth in the inner parts, so it's not you let your emotions all hang out everywhere, [make sobbing sounds] all over the place, no. There's appropriate places, but in worship, we should be able to express our joy, our freedom, our - Calinda was amazing. Calinda had a back condition, really in pain, didn't even want to come to church, came to church then got dancing and got healed as she danced! Now that's what faith will do, do you understand?

It doesn't mean you ignore your pain; it means you actually, in the midst of it, do you express faith in God? Okay, another thing that goes a bit like that is, you notice what Adam said: I was afraid, and so I hid; so the other thing we do is we tend to hide our weaknesses. Now this is a funny thing hiding weaknesses. The interesting thing is that a person is very, very difficult to relate to if they're a perfect person. I don't find perfect people easy to relate to. You become conscious you seem to be leaving a mess on their floor. [Laughter] You've been into some houses like that, and it almost feels the moment you walk in, you've started to bring a mess with you. You know if you eat anything, and no crumbs are going to get on the floor, you just know you're going to spill the cup - there's tension all the time

you're there. You get out and you're exhausted, just trying to behave right. [Laughter] It's hard to relate to people like that. Real people make mistakes, and they make them almost almost every day of their lives. That's what real people are like - including me.

I have a great message of grace. The reason I've got a great message of grace is I've made so many mistakes - I desperately needed God to help me - and the grace I've got comes out of being so grateful God forgave me. I've got a very big heart to forgive people, because I've been forgiven much. You understand, it's like God doesn't call us to be perfect in our behaviours. He calls us to have a heart that's right, a perfect heart towards Him, responsive to Him. Now you see this thing of trying to look good, act good, perform good, and be a goody-goody-two-shoes Christian, and then try and make your children the same - well that doesn't go down well at all. One, they'll either rebel against you, in which case you've got a battle on your hands all the way; or two, they are compliant, but inside they're rebelling. They're saying yes on the outside, but inside they're standing up; and one day it breaks out! Oh! Where did that come from? How did that happen? Well you've just shut them down all your life.

See, we've got to watch that we give grace and space for our children to actually be normal people, who make mistakes, and funnily enough in some families some kids are really nice, and really easy, real easy. Some kids are really soft, really easy to train. Others are like - where did this monster come from? [Laughter] How - what did I do in my last life to deserve this? [Laughter] And the rest of the church, oh tut-tut-tut-tut-tut, there must be something wrong, yeah, must be something wrong with your parenting. They've got no idea what struggle's going on there, with the strong-willed child; and while you're raising them, and trying to deal with them, you're aware everyone's looking. [Laughter] Looking at you, looking at the goody goody kids, whoa! Like that - and while you're struggling with that child, you remember that you were just like that when you were growing up. [Laughter] The full circle of life has come around, and you are reaping what you've sown! [Laughter] Everyone can see it now! [Laughs]

I can remember one of my grandchildren, I looked into her eyes when she was very little, and I said ooh! You are going to have some fun with this one! [Laughter] She is just like you - and I'm thinking oh oh, it goes round! [Laughter] But this is all part of life you know, there's no perfect families, no perfect people, no perfect world. It's a messy beat up world, with all kinds of sin and problems, and grace is what changes it, so we have to receive grace for ourselves if we're going to give it to anyone else. Getting the idea? We'll give you a couple more, then we'll just wind it up - getting the idea? [Laughs] So concealing, covering up.

Okay, another thing which is related to it, which people tend to do, in Luke 9:23, you've heard the scripture; Whoever wants to be my disciple, he must deny himself. Whoa! Lyn, you would have had that scripture, take up the cross! Ooh - and so what happens is, you already had a low esteem, and now it just got worse, now I'm a nothing, a nobody, and you're struggling, never good enough. The problem is, we often give up the wrong things in church, [laughs] give up the wrong things, and what happens is we bury the gifts of God. Now listen, God put in you desires. Desires in you can be very evil, desires can be very good. The desires God gives are very good. He puts desires in your heart. He puts dreams in your heart. He puts gifts in your heart, so don't bury the gifts, don't bury the dreams, desires, longings, yearnings, the goals. Don't bury them all down, don't bury your life. Don't bury the things that God says: these are valuable. I find, I look in the church, I see so many people, the goodness in them is all buried, because they're so burdened over all the things that are wrong.

Listen, the things you put aside, and the things you bring to the cross, are pride and arrogance and independence, all that kind of stuff. But listen, the dreams, desires, longings, gifts, this is part of who you are. You have to call them forth, and connect with people that'll help, say: boy you'd be good at that; otherwise we have a covering over our life, and no one sees what we really are, or what we could be. Church is to be a family, where sons and daughters are encouraged to step out and do stuff, try stuff, and if you make a mistake, well good on you, you had a go. You can't exist in a culture where you can't have a go. Just have a go. I've had a go for years. You know almost everything I've learnt, I went somewhere, and I had a go, tried it out. All the things I learnt pretty well in the supernatural I've developed in, I went somewhere else, and I practiced and had a go. I thought I can leave and go home and then [laughs] and took risks, took terrible risks, but it's helped me grow see?

So here's another couple of things, and then we'll just finish them, I'll just finish. Here's a couple of goodies that Christians cover up, and one is, we cover up our background, and won't admit that our background is affecting how we live our life today - cover up our background. Now listen, if you think about your background, your background is about how you were raised, it's the values you got, how you thought about money, how you thought about family, how you thought about conflict, how you thought about emotions, how you thought about anger and handling anger, how you thought about handling disappointments, how you handled success in life. Most of the values you have, they were formed as you grew up in your family, and of course if we grow up in broken families, we need to face the reality that a lot of our thinking is wrong, and needs to change.

The only way you can do that, is being willing to let the Holy Ghost help you resolve your past, and to bring revelation truth about how you live your life and become effective. So I need to be willing to face - I've had to face things, I'm still facing stuff. It'll never stop, it's just a journey of walking with God, and layer by layer He opens our life, we face things that are painful, we talk with Him. He shows us the truth, and we begin to move on with our life. It's a journey. It's okay to be on that journey, but don't just pretend that your family was perfect. Don't sort of say something like I heard someone say when I was counselling: well I've moved on. That's my past, all behind me, it's at the cross. I said: well you seem to have brought a lot with you. [Laughter] It looks to me like it's all just happening, just like it was in your family. It helps you to have a think about how you saw things in your own family, and how they're happening in your family right now. Chances are they're the same - unless you've actually been healed in that area, and allowed the Lord to bring truth to you.

The last one is the issue of conflict. One of the big issues, that is a problem for us, is the issue of conflict, handling conflict; and either spiritualising it away, or hiding it away, or putting it under a carpet hoping it'll die; but it's usually like cancer. It just spreads, it doesn't get any better, and one of the areas that Christians have to learn to do, is how to engage one another when there are differences, and learn how to enter into places where there are conflicts. It's not easy to do that, and we're going to share a session just related to that at some point, on how Jesus, interestingly enough, stirred up conflict wherever He went. What He did was He demolished the false peace, by exposing what was really happening, and when He did that it made room for change to take place. In some places, He actually said things that provoked out to the open, and created a huge conflict. So life has got lots of conflicts in it, and in church, we're not good at that.

I know for me growing up, conflict was a thing of tremendous emotional pain. It was an evil - you don't have it if you can avoid it, but actually you can't avoid it. You need to engage it. That's the truth, but sometimes we need to be healed in order to do that. If we're going to go out and have effect in the community, in a greater level than we have now, there will be conflict; and if you're unwilling to get enter into it, you'll be at a great disadvantage. You'll be beaten up, spat out, and you'll say: evangelism's not for me. I think I'll just carry on down to the church, and I'll cross by the other side of the road, and I won't be bothered about getting involved with those people. It just hurts too much. So God is calling us to grow up emotionally, spiritually, become mature, so that we are empowered to have greater impact in the community - so one and the other go hand in hand.

As you go to the community, as you touch the lives of people, you become aware of what's in your life, and you grow. As you grow, you do it again, and try different things. Listen, we're living in a great hour worldwide. We were just at a conference, 20,000 people, and I looked and I saw every province in China was represented there. I realised I had personally trained every one of those people in how to move in the power of God, and bring God to people. Even though at times it's been very difficult, you see what impact you can have. Thousands can be impacted, or just a few, or just one or two; whatever it is, we can all make a difference in someone's world. But let's not have a look, tut-tut-tut, and cross to the other side, and go to another church meeting. Let's make a decision: God, I want to grow in my maturity, emotionally and spiritually, and I want to be engaged in reaching people that need You. I present myself to You to do that.

Summary Notes

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1. Introduction:

· Luke 10:27 - "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself".

· God's plan is for each of us to grow, mature and fulfill the calling of God.

· Most people are unable to love and connect there is too much junk/stuff in their lives. The problem is that the Priest and the Levite, who represent the church, didn't want to get involved. To not want to get involved is not an option. They walked past the man; they didn't have the heart of God for broken damaged people.

· Love

= passion, energy, wholehearted, fully engaged.

= connect meaningfully with God and people/neighbors.

1) Connect with God – who He really is – not our image of Him.

2) Connect with Self – who we are – what is really happening within us, our strengths, weaknesses, desires, pain.

3) Connect with People – able to enter their world and serve them.

· Verse 33 - The Good Samaritan entered the world of the broken man, he did what he could. He was moved with compassion, he entered the broken man's world to find out what was wrong and ministered to him.

· This is what spiritual maturity looks like, it brings love and compassion into people's lives, it helps people who need help. This is the heart of God.

· Religious people avoided, hid from people in need, from the true calling of God.

· Samaritans were despised by religious people as they hang out with the wrong kind of people.

· We engage the Holy Spirit; we get trained so that we have something to pour into people. To be able to do this, we have to enter into their world.

· The Church today is disconnected from broken people. We have to be authentic, authentic people are able to connect to others.

2. Adam, Eve and Fig leaves:

- Genesis 3:7-10 - Behavior of Adam and Eve – spiritual and emotionally damaged.
- Fig leaves = covering who I am, identity – presenting an image.
- Hid in trees – avoiding connection from the presence of God.
- Adam and Eve constructed coverings and avoiding behaviors to conceal the true condition of their world = causes pain.
- To cover up, draw back and control will cause people to become lonely. The answer is within you. It is covered because of drawback, control and not be authentic.
- The fig leaves must come of for a person to be authentic. Adam believed a lie, how can a person fulfill God's mandate in life if they cover up and hide?
- Walls we build to control our world – hinder us fulfilling our purpose.
- 1) Become lonely – isolated, fearful.
- 2) Cannot enjoy relationships.
- 3) Cannot fulfill purpose – enter world and be an ambassador for Christ.
- Fig leaves are works and activities and behaviors that conceal who we really are so we do not have to face pain and need for change.
- Authentic = you blow it once in a while but you know how to correct it e.g apologizing.

· Good Samaritan

= engaged the world of broken people and changed it.

= demonstrated what maturity looks like.

· What are the 'Christian Fig leaves?'

3. Fig Leaves and other Christian Coverings:

- 1) Substituting Christian activities for Authentic Relationships:
 - Luke 10:38 - Martha buried herself into working for the Lord.
 - People bury self in spiritual activities but ignore areas of life that are difficult and God wants to change those areas.
 - People hide behind 'God talk' creating an illusion that is spiritual but unwilling to face personal flows (defensive).
 - Exaggerating spiritual experiences to appear important before others.
 - Applying the Bible selectively – ignore truth requiring changes in attitudes, personalities and relationship e.g. workaholic or spiritual flake.

2) Dividing Life into Natural and Spiritual (dualism):

- John 10:10 - "I have come that you may have life – abundantly".
- The life of Jesus is for every aspect and area of our life.
- People divide up life: (1) Christian activity (2) Natural – rest of week
- Church sings about love – curse drivers on their way home.
- Business men worship God – dishonest during the week.
- Christian trust God – won't pay bills.
- Christians focus on spiritual – but won't face the natural (carnal).
- God calls us to represent Him in every area of life. Represent God without being religious, with excellent service and integrity.
- We connect to Jesus, He grows (raise to maturity) us so that we can impact the world around us. We are called to be the Good Samaritan.
- Wisdom = win people, not religion or weirdness.

3) Burying Painful Emotions:

- We are created in the image of God with emotions and we have them too.
- John 11:35 - Jesus wept.
- Feeling and emotions are part of being human, in image of God.
- If unable to express emotions – dishonor yourself. Be authentic with God; pour out your soul to Him. Express passionately and then stir faith.
- People express anger, pain, loss, grief, fear, sadness. It is ok to human. You can't be a perfect Christian. He desires truth in the inner parts.
- Christians seem to bury and conceal the emotion or sin.
- Listening to the voice of the emotion enables us to understand our inner world.

4) Concealing Weaknesses and Failures:

- Genesis 3:10 - "I was afraid – hid"
- Grace changes; if you receive grace for yourself it will be easier to give grace to others.
- God doesn't call us to be perfect in behavior, but to have relationship with Him.
- People feel pressure to present their image as strong and together.
- Bible is full of broken people David, Noah, Moses, Peter, Jonah, Jacob.
- They all had faults, when these faults were out in the open they have experienced the grace of God.

5) Burying the Gifts of God:

- Luke 9:23 - Disciple = "deny self, take up the cross and follow Me".
- People, who have been rejected, low esteem, misinterpret.
- We are not called to bury desires, gifts, dreams, passions, laughter, music, art, beauty, recreation – these are gifts of God.
- Every person is designed uniquely – to represent God.
- Need to discover what God has put in you, not for you to kill it.
- Die to self = put to death defenses, arrogance and judging others.

6) Denying the Impact of their Past:

- 2 Corinthians 5:17 - "Behold, all things have become new".
- Past life continues to impact how the church relates to each other – we must change.
- People try to 'move on' = pretend their past never happened.
- Check out how the family handled life! E.g. money, conflict, sex, grief, expresses anger, family, relationships, feelings and emotions.
- Past patterns continue until revelation of New Culture – Family of God.

7) Spiritualizing and Avoiding Conflict/differences:

- No one like conflict but conflict is everywhere.
- John 4:16-18 - Jesus' life was filled with conflict, He created it! He disrupted 'false peace' -refused to minimize.
- People see conflict as bad, something to fix or avoid.
- Result = blame, attachments, dishonest, silent, give in, avoid, with-draw.

With God we grow and mature to have power and impact the community.
We can all make a difference in someone's world.

Fig Leaves and Other Christian Coverings (3 of 4)

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God sees the heart that responds and work with it. Holy Spirit speaks to an open heart. We won't go forward if we don't grow. Be able to receive grace, don't beat yourself up. Ask God to help, guide, show you, and enable you to get up – have a heart good to God. Ask forgiveness, help – grace and goodness will come to the humble. You will then be able to show grace and minister to others, to enter other people's lives. We need to take responsibility to grow and change otherwise we don't have anything to give to other people. Authenticity with God is to be passionate and willing to grow. Don't stay where you are, step forward, move on, step up.

I want you to open your Bible with me in Luke, Chapter 10. We've been looking at fig leaves, or how people cover up, and stop being authentic and real, and being a great pretence. There's a heap of people are - you could probably call them this: The Great Pretender. [Laughter] God doesn't want the church to be full of great pretenders. You know at Christmas we celebrate that God sent His Son into the earth to represent Him, and so now when Jesus left He said: as the Father sent Me, now I send you; and He doesn't send a heap of pretenders. He sends a heap of real people to represent what God is really like, to be authentic.

Last week we were looking about how Jesus had described what it means to love, and to be a mature believer, it means there's a spiritual dimension, emotional dimension, physical dimension. Every part of our life is engaged in passionately loving God, and it always overflows to those around us, so we can see how authentic, how mature we are in the way we deal with the people around us. Well unfortunately many aren't doing too good there and Christmas time is a great time for people not to treat one another too well. They get busy all year, bury all their problems, get together at Christmas and they're all on holiday, then they start to get upset with one another. It shouldn't be like that should it really? It doesn't need to be either.

Notice here there's a man who's been beaten up in life and been wounded and it says of the Good Samaritan - Verse 34 - he went to him, bandaged up his wounds - that's the word trauma. He went to him, he initiated action to go to the man who had been traumatically impacted by what had happened to him, pouring on oil and wine; set him on his horse, took him to an inn and took care of him. So this man entered the world of someone who was traumatised, found out what was wrong in his life and then brought the life anointing of the Holy Spirit to impart, to heal and to bring restoration to him. All of us believers are called into this ministry. Jesus said the spirit of the Lord is upon Me. He's anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor - that's to bring people into an encounter with the living God, become saved - but God's got much more for us than that.

He's anointed Me to heal the broken hearted. That means God wants to heal brokenness in our lives so we can enter into meaningful relationships, because without relationships you don't have a life. It's true isn't it? Without relationships you don't have a life. People who've got no relationships, you know you kind of - he hasn't got a life has he really? Got no friends, got no - you're just buried in something and many times we substitute - I know people that substitute model trains for relationships. Watching it go round - wonderful hobby I suppose but not my thing. But usually it's a substitute for having genuine relationships. Some have a pet instead of a relationship, have a relationship with a pet. Well that's a strange thing really. Nice to have pets, they're wonderful, part of God's creation - but we're made to relate to people, made to relate to God so we've got to learn to have a relationship with God.

So the anointing on Jesus is to heal those who are broken hearted and many times we saw people cover over what they're really like, so in this story here we saw genuine love, the love of God. What God is wanting to do with us is to put into us a love and to grow us so mature that we can actually enter into the world of others and help them. Now the trouble is how can you enter the world of other people very successfully if you won't even enter your own world? How can you be authentic to other people if you're covering up who you really are and what's really going on? The biggest

complaint against church, although it's often unfounded but there's some truth in it, is they're hypocrites. They play. They're nice on Sunday but the rest of the week you want to see what they're like pastor. I don't know whether I do - rather be in denial and look at all these happy faces and say aren't they all wonderful. The reality's a little bit different though isn't it?

The reality is that many people, their walk daily is actually inconsistent with what we believe and so God wants us to grow and mature, to grow up. Growing up isn't easy. It's got some challenges with it and I want to share with you today some keys to help you grow. In Genesis 3:7 we saw that Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves together, made themselves coverings. In Verse 10 he said I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself, so Adam and Eve as a consequence of the fall hid themselves from painful reality. To actually come into the presence of God meant to face what was really happening in their life and Adam said I was afraid. That means he had deep feelings, bad feelings, bad vibes and he said because I was naked and so I ran away and hid.

We saw how Adam and Eve as a consequence of the fall concealed their identity, covered themselves up and then hid and we see here a pattern; their behaviour of hiding came about as a result of them feeling fear and believing God was going to punish them. So when we look at people's lives you see the outward part which is like the tip of an iceberg on the surface, but below that outward part is where people really live. So if I'm going to grow as a believer and grow in my relationship with God and ability to represent Him, I've got to change on the inside. I've got to explore my inner world and discover what is in there. Now you don't have to become introspective, looking into yourself all the time, but the Holy Spirit is given and He dwells inside you and His job is to bring to your awareness where you need to grow up.

[The Bible said Jesus said 00.06.01] in John 14, I won't leave you orphans. I won't leave you without a Father, so if you've been without a father in your life or been under poor - perhaps your parents weren't able to function, your father wasn't able to function as God intended to, nevertheless the spirit that God puts into you, the Holy Spirit of God is a fathering spirit. It is to speak into your heart direction, correction and to bring about maturity so you discover who you are and how to relate and live your life and how to fulfil a purpose. That's the role of a father, one of the major roles of a father - so Jesus said I will pour My spirit into you and the Holy Spirit I put inside you will be a witness you belong - that God is your Father, but also that spirit, the Holy Spirit in you is to bring you to face realities, to face truth. If we keep covered up and hiding our life and don't want to go there or pretend we've moved on when we haven't moved on, or minimise what's happening in our life, we miss out on the opportunity to grow and fulfil what God called us to do.

It's very difficult to enter into anyone else's life very deeply if you're very shallow yourself. Can God use you? Of course He can. You can encourage someone, you can show an act of kindness to someone, you could visit them, you could ring them, you can connect with them, give to them. You can do all sorts of things, but there's a dimension of reaching into lives to really authentically help people which won't be yours unless you're willing to grow. So God wants us on a journey. Now how does God get us to grow when many times we don't want to face the areas which are damaged, nor address them? We want to just to push them under and get going. Well God's got a great strategy and that strategy's called pain. Pain - you notice if you hit your thumb and you're in pain the one thing you notice is your thumb. You notice nothing else. Your whole world is filled with THUMB! Isn't that right?

So whatever you're in pain about will always get your attention, so God has got a strategy. If you don't want to face changes in your life and He's committed to changes in your life, how's He going to get your attention? Well a whole heap of ways, but one of them is pain. Now does that mean God causes pain? No, no, no, no. No, we do stupid things that cause ourselves pain, but God allows us to go through a journey where we have to stop and have a look at what's happening and if you can develop a lifestyle where you develop your inner world and begin to mature and grow in your inner world, your outer world will change dramatically. Most people I talk to are wanting God, they're praying God change this; God change my husband, God change my work, God - now what they're doing is they're trying to get exterior changes and not looking how should I be changing on the inside so I can become the kind of person that's needed, see? Change on the inside, your exteriors will change quite quickly.

So you know for a young man the key question is not well where's a good looking girl? Listen, there's heaps of them around. The big question you can answer is what kind of man will I be? Will I be the kind of man that a good girl, a Christian, a believer would really want to follow or will I be some unreliable person? I need to work on myself. If you work on yourself you'll be surprised how quickly God will bring someone into your life. Okay, in Deuteronomy 8, Verses 2 and 3, it says Moses is reminding them; he's saying remember the way the Lord your God led you all the way through the wilderness and allowed you, he humbled you, he allowed you to suffer hunger and go through all kinds of different things and as a consequence of that the purpose of that was that He might know you. See, read it there - I'll read it. So He humbled you and allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you didn't know nor

fathers know, that He might make you to know man shall not live by bread alone; but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.

So God led them. Now you understand the heart of God. God has got a people that have been in bondage. That's the picture of us when we're unsaved before we come to Christ. Then God has got promises, promises about marriage, about family, about finances, about a future, about a destiny, but how does God get them from one to the other? He takes them through a period or an experience called a wilderness experience. So it was God's idea that the wilderness would last them about 10 days. They made it last 40 years. How did they make it last 40 years? Well they just refused to face what they needed to face and grow and change. God was trying to get rid of the victim mentality, this poor me, I can't do anything and someone come through for me, and to raise up a generation who had faith and courage, who would go and make things happen. So He allowed them to go through some experiences which were painful - so they went out in the desert, after a little while there was no water. Then the water they did find was a bit bitter, so what did they do? They had an opportunity to grow.

Did they grow? No, they didn't, they blew it, just complained. Then He took them another place, they got no food. What did they do; did they have an opportunity there to grow? Yes, they did. Did they grow? No, they didn't, they just complained and this went on so long in the end they demonstrated they were unable to enter into all that God had for them. Now begin to think of that in your personal life, of God having many things He wants you to have and to enter an experience, but He's allowing you to walk through a few experiences to help you come to grips with your inner world and change. If you continue to resist changing and doubt that God is good and God can bring you through and what God says, what happens is you delay your life actually ever progressing and accomplishing all God wants. That's why many Christians after years have accomplished little or nothing. They're still in the same place they were years ago.

As a church it's the same. Corporately God wants us to move through difficulties, pressures, stresses, at times opposition, in order that we grow as a corporate body because He has many things in this city, our nation and beyond. So whatever level we look at it God still always does not change how He operates; He allows us to go through some difficulties in order that faith might grow, believing God. In the midst of it what happens is, it says He humbled them that He might know what was in them. Now does that mean God doesn't know what's in you? Not at all. He knows exactly what's in you. If you've got a deep-seated fear He knows it's in there. If you've got a deep-seated grief or bitterness or you're twisted up inside God knows it's there. The problem is you don't. We just blunder through life causing problems all around us, blindly unaware of what's going and just praising God. Isn't that right? You've seen heaps of people like that see?

So God knows but He has to take us through experiences where what's in us surfaces. It's like the refiner refining gold. They heat it until it melts and it's only when it melts you see what was in it, so God knows just how to get you up until you melt and usually that means you lose your cool: I'm losing control! Good, maybe there's going to be a control transfer here. Maybe there'll be a trust take place, because what you fear will control your life so when you feel you're about to lose control it's just the point where you've got the chance to grow in your faith, your believing, your trust in God. Okay, now in order to do that then you've got to look in your inner world, so God uses a bit of pain sometimes and real change requires we be a bit honest. Now what I've observed in my life and other people over years is our preference, our preferred choice is to control and manipulate our exterior life so we won't have to face the inner stuff. Is that true? Tell someone next to you I think he's talking to you about that one. [Laughter]

See how easy it is to put it outside us? It's not me, I'm okay mate, see? So we'd prefer to try and get control over what's around us. God wants to transform what's in us and change the ownership of what's in us, so how do we do it? How do we do it? What are some keys or what are some things I can build into my life that will help the process of change so I get deeper with God and get to know myself and begin to start to grow in my awareness of God in my life? There's many things. I want to talk primarily today about beginning to connect with the things which are inside you which you may not be aware of and I guarantee as you just take a little bit of time over the next couple of weeks you'll find all of these things surfacing, especially around the Christmas time.

Okay then, the first one is develop an awareness of what you're feeling and doing. Develop an awareness. Awareness means you're conscious of what you're feeling and what you're doing - develop an awareness or consciousness of what you're feeling, what you're doing. Now it's easier said than done because most people don't want to feel bad stuff inside. In John 13 and Verses 3 through to 5, it says this. It says Jesus, knowing He was, where He'd come from, where He went to. Let's pick it up here; Jesus, knowing the Father had given all things into His hands, knowing He came from God, He was going to God, rose up and laid aside His garments, took a towel and then He began to pour water into the basin and wash the disciples feet and wipe them with the towel that He was girded with. Now you notice here that Jesus knowing, He knew some stuff. What did He know? He knew His identity.

He knew where He came from, knew where He was going. He actually was fully aware of who He was and fully aware that He's the creator, the king of glory, He's able to bend down and wash disciple's feet. That's a pretty amazing thing.

He had no need to keep up a show, a pretence, or say listen, I'm in charge here. Listen, you guys need to do something. No, He did it you see, so He was very secure because He was fully aware of who He was. Jesus was very secure in His identity. The second thing is Jesus was deeply aware of what He felt and was unashamed to express it. He was very aware of His emotions. The Bible says in John 11, I think Verse 33, Jesus wept. There's other places He got annoyed, angry; other places He was furious, other places He was astonished, other places the Bible tells us He prayed with strong crying and tears. So Jesus was a passionate man, connected to His feelings. When you're moving and flowing with the Holy Spirit one of the most common ways that we experience the Holy Spirit is we feel an impression inside, but there's many other things we feel inside too and that's in our emotional area.

So Jesus was connected very strongly to His emotions. Because He was aware of His own feelings He could be aware of the feelings of others. I've found when people are disconnected in their own life they're disconnected outside as well. In Mark 1, Verse 41, the leper came and the leper was desperate. He was emotional, he was in terrible need and the Bible says Jesus was moved with compassion. He felt the pain in another's life and it moved Him to enter their life and help them. We can walk by people, we can be sitting beside people, we can relate and talk and be totally unaware of the pain they are carrying in their life. We carry on like everything's just perfect. We live life at a surface level, but if you want to make impact in people's lives you have to be able to go beyond the surface to what's really happening in their life.

One of the ways you do that is you develop this journey in your own life. You get past the surface and you begin to discover what's really going on inside you; how do I feel? How do I think? How do I behave? What do I really believe? See we all believe in Jesus - Glory to God! Okay, but when you're faced with a pressure what feelings surface, what do you really think? What is going on and how do you really behave? So everyone in a church meeting feels good. The musicians create a great atmosphere, we all feel good, lift our hands, praise the Lord, oh that was great! Then tomorrow, down the road and now we face a pressure and we feel other things and those feelings are telling us or indicating to us what is really going on in our heart, the conflicts, struggles, the belief system that's inside us. If we're not willing to connect with it we can't change. As you believe in your heart, that's how you'll live your life.

So we can come to church on Sunday and in all sincerity lift our hands, praise the Lord, tell Him we love Him, but on Monday live a very unloving life, unaware of what is really going on in our inner world and part of the growth to maturity is becoming much more aware of what goes on inside you, why you do what you do. So the first level of changing, you've got to become aware of things and scientists have worked out there's a number of emotions we have and not all of them are pleasant: anger, sadness, fear, these are common emotions people have. These are feelings people have. It's okay to be angry, it's okay to be afraid, it's okay to be sad, but when you're a Christian somehow you think I shouldn't have that. But Jesus had them all. He didn't have the fear one but He was angry at times and He was sad at times, He was astonished at times, He was joyful at times, He was amazed at times and He was totally connected to His feelings. How connected are you? See, how connected you?

So we need to recognise then we have feelings and we need to identify what they are. If I can [be aware of 00.20.12] what I feel it's like an indicator on a dashboard. It tells me the conflicts, turmoil or whatever's going on inside my heart, so you have a look - for example you're driving down the road, someone gets in front of you, you start to get irritated. Let's define irritated, it means angry okay, so we've got little angry, a little more angry, angry, very angry. Most guys can't tell you anything, they just bang the door and you're angry. No I wasn't! Because of disconnection. We need to actually become aware what is it really going on because the first way to get victory over your inner life is to acknowledge what's there and name it. God brought all the creatures to Adam and He named them. Naming them is a part of having dominion over things. If you don't identify and name things it's unlikely you'll have dominion over it. You'll just - I just feel down. Come on, well let's talk about that, what do you mean by that? How long has it been like that?

You begin to enquire and then you begin to feel actually I'm angry, I'm depressed and it's because I didn't get my way. I believe I should have got my way. I believe they should have come through and done what I wanted them to do and they didn't and they disappointed me. But because I want them to like me I never said anything and now I feel really down and bad about me as well. That's what goes on in the inner world of some people and you ask them how are you doing? Oh FINE! Okay then, so we need to explore and look, so one of the things about feelings is that they're given to us by God as part of being a human being, part of being in the image of God, so with feelings you just need to name them and identify them, be aware of them and then name them. Now one way you can become aware

of it is you watch your body. When your stomach feels knotted up there's something going on, there's anxiety or fear. If you find you're grinding your teeth there's something wrong. It's sending a signal to you you know? Just like when you feel hungry, it's sending a signal I'm empty, I need food.

So your feelings or tensions in your body, some people clench their jaw or clench - you watch people, watch yourself most of all. Begin to discover what you're doing and it'll tell you what's going on in your inner world. The other time you can start to discover what's happening is as you pray. You're praying about your journey, you're praying about situations in your life and as you're praying in tongues and you begin to picture those things you begin to feel and become aware of things. Try to name what you feel because how many people have had an experience like this: you really felt a reserve or something, no peace about something but you didn't say anything and later on it turned out it was real bad? How many have had that experience? We've pretty well all had that. Well why didn't we listen to the inner thing? See we tend to live life at the surface and in the head rather than actually in the heart and spirit.

If you're going to be a spirit person you have to learn to examine what you feel, what's going on in your inner life and it's not that you focus on it, it's just you label it and name it so you then know what to do with it. Otherwise you'll do what a lot of people do, oh, going to push it down, stuff it down. Well after you've had years of stuffing down your body breaks down. Bodies break down because unforgiveness grew into resentment and bitterness and then the body became poisoned. After a while physically they got sick, so some people have got arthritis right through their body and the core prime reason is they've accumulated bitterness and resentment. They never dealt with anything; oh, I just moved on or I got over it. No, you didn't get over it, it's manifesting in your body. I've prayed for so many people and the moment, the moment they came to a place of recognising their anger and resentment and unforgiveness and forgave, immediately the spirit tormenting them was able to be cast out and they were instantly healed.

So your body signals what's going on in your inner life as does your feelings, so you've got to learn to connect with them. What am I feeling? What am I sensing? Sometimes you just feel I feel a bit off. What does it mean, off? I just feel a bit down. How long have you been feeling like that? So the first thing is become aware of what you feel and how you're behaving, so for example you see someone and then you look away. Why did they look away? What did I feel? Oh, felt like upset. What do you mean upset? Actually angry. Oh okay, you're angry. How long have you been angry with that person? Can you understand? So your behaviours and your emotions will trigger what you really believe and what's really going on in your heart and if we don't observe our behaviours and notice what we're feeling, identify and search for what's going on, we'll never grow.

We'll never discover what we believe and where our belief system is totally at variance with what God's word says could be ours. A person for example who's experienced a lot of pain of rejection, they've got a lot of emotions inside, grief and stuff they've never resolved and they begin to believe after a while well no one ever wants me. They walk into a church, walk into any group, someone looks the other way and immediately they feel rejected. It triggers off their belief - oh I knew it, I knew it, there's no love in this place. Now they're starting to get wound up and angry and walking down the street fuming about the church - but it was never about the church. It was actually a lot of unresolved stuff and when the feeling came up they just got into an old bad habit and never dealt with it.

The country's full of immature Christians doing all this kind of stuff. Someone thinks different, does a bit differently, next thing you know they're all wound up and got an attitude and there's [fear 00.25.48] - all kinds of stuff going on. Gossip goes around. You've got to be bigger than that. You've got to grow bigger! Don't stay little. If we're going to be a bigger church you've got to grow a bigger person. We've all got to grow bigger so we've got to look at our inner world and grow, so first thing is become aware of what you're feeling and what you're doing; second is ask questions. Ask yourself some questions; what's going on? What's going on in here? Why am I doing what I'm doing? What am I feeling? See, how long have I been feeling that? Why am I feeling that? What am I doing? What's going on inside? See, if I'm avoiding someone well why am I avoiding them, what is that all about?

You begin to search your heart and what you're looking for is the truth and fortunately Jesus said I will send you the Holy Spirit and He's the spirit of truth, meaning nothing's covered over in front of Him. So the Holy Spirit will help you in your journey of growth. How does He help you? One way He helps you is He helps you face things you don't want to face. If you won't face it by listening to Him and developing a devotional life where you hear the voice of God, then what'll happen is you'll find He'll get your attention through someone else. You got the idea? So like Jesus did this with the disciples. In Luke 24 He joins the disciples on the road to Emmaus, He says hey you guys, what's up? What are you talking about? Hey, you're looking sad, what's going on inside there? He began to explore their inner world and they just opened their heart, talked about their inner world, then He nailed them over their beliefs because why they were moving from the call of God, why they were feeling disappointed, why they were doing all these things was because of what they believed, see?

Why did Adam hide? Because he believed a lie. What if he'd believed instead of believing that God was going to punish him, what if he believed God was a good God and God was compassionate and God would show mercy and he acted on that belief and ran to straight to Him, saying God come to me, I've really blown it. Help me now, I really have messed up here. What if he'd done that? You see what he believed was reflected in how he outworked his life. You've got to realise we're all the same. All of us are the same, so we want to journey through growth we've got to be willing to develop and deepen our inner life, firstly becoming aware of ourselves, secondly becoming aware and conscious of God. We'll share about that another time, how to do that - so ask questions: what on earth's happening inside me? What am I feeling? How long have I been feeling that? Where's that come from? What does that mean I probably believe, see?

The third thing is welcome feedback. You've got to welcome into your world some feedback because the reality is most of us don't want to face the things we're in pain over and so you're not listening to the Holy Ghost. You don't want to even go there. Don't go there God! I don't want - and He'll talk about your attitude to a father or attitude to some person, your attitude to your finances - hey, don't go there! Just want you to bless over here, want the exterior and God wants you to look at the interior and so if He can't get your attention that way He's got a heap of ways of getting it. One way is your whole financial world collapses and inevitably if it collapses God has been talking to you for months before that happened - no listen. He probably sent people to you to talk to you - no listen. So welcome feedback into your world. If you want to grow in your inner life, one, practice becoming aware of what's happening and what you're feeling, what your body's saying, what you're experiencing inside; two, ask questions so you explore what's going on. Begin to look at what's happening in your inner life. What do I believe? What does this mean? Why am I like that? And then welcome others to come into your world.

In Proverbs 15 and Verse 32 it says the person who refuses instruction or feedback despises his own soul. He who hears reproof gains understanding. So the person who won't allow anyone to come into his life, won't allow anyone to speak into his life, that person's not only very alone, they actually despise their own soul. They've got real issues of rejection. Proverbs 19:20, he that hears counsel and receives correction that you may be wise in your latter end, so hear counsel. Listen to advice, allow people to speak into your world, so here's three questions: Number one, how much do you tune in to what you feel and what's happening in your inner world? How aware are you what's going on in your inner life? Two, do you probe to find out why you're doing what you're doing? Three, is there anyone you've got that can talk into your life and give you some feedback? The feedback they'll talk to you about is your behaviour and attitude.

I've observed over the years of being a Christian that many people get offended the moment you give them any feedback that isn't telling them they're a wonderful person: you're wonderful, you're beautiful, you're magnificent! You're beautiful beyond description, too marvellous for words. People like that one, but actually you say listen, I didn't like that, that attitude was bad and it's really quite negative. Oh, who do you think you are! [unclear 00.30.38] get like this, get all offended all of a sudden. Well that person's a fool because the Bible says the person who can't be corrected or won't receive or welcome correction in their life, that person despises their own soul. They're destroying themselves. They're missing out on the opportunity - so when did someone last speak into your life? Feedback would need to be specific; hey there's this behaviour, this action, this attitude, this is what I noticed.

It needs to be in a way that you can actually make a decision to change, so you've got to respond to it by not being defensive. When God confronted King Saul he said I've sinned, but look I want it to look good in front of the people so can you come on out and just make it all look good? See, he's still trying to cover up. When David was confronted, you've sinned, he said I've sinned against the Lord! - immediately repentant. He was not defensive like Saul was. Saul was very, very defensive, raised a wall, you couldn't talk into his life, you couldn't say anything. So when was the last time someone gave you a little bit of negative feedback or talked to you about something you needed to change? How did you react? Did you walk out of that ministry, walk out of that church, walk away from that person, walk out of that thing because you were offended? Or did you be like a wise man, welcome correction?

Now here's the thing. If the Holy Spirit is a teacher and brings us into truth and He speaks to us internally, He also speaks externally. Now if I will adopt the position and an attitude I welcome feedback and welcome the input; now the feedback you want is mostly from the people who are near to you, someone you rely on because they know you, love you, got a vested interest in you. Others have got all kinds of attitudes, but in all feedback there's something you can often get help from. It's just a matter of actually getting your attitude right. I had some strange person or a stranger, a person I didn't know sent me an unpleasant email and I looked at it. Initially my first thought was [dread 00.32.28] and I thought I wonder why I'm reacting? Stop and have a think about it - I think actually what's going on in this person's life? Oh, I can see what's going on. I can actually do something to help them, so I'll make a response that will help them. Understand? Otherwise you just live life at the surface and it's very ineffective.

Then finally you need to commit to the process of change. You must commit to the process of change. You want to grow and change you have to commit to growing. How many people are beginning, you just said oh God, I want to grow, I want to change, I want to really grow? That's it, a few people did. I think most of us did. When you come into next year, the beginning of the year, oh! I want to change! Okay, so Jesus always requires us to get some ownership [of this thing 00.33.08] so in the man Bethesda, Jesus said to him do you want to be made whole? Do you want to change or are you happy to keep doing the same stuff you're doing this year? I think no way, I've got to change, I've got to grow, got to get bigger. Come on, think about that. Do you want to change? Unless you say yes to that you're going to stay the same - maybe have a few crises on the way. [Laughs]

Okay, do you want to change, number one, you must want to change; number two, you invest in relationships that encourage growth. Invest in relationships that will help you to grow. In other words none of us grow too well on our own. You get a bit bizarre on your own, get a bit weird. You need other people around you to talk to you and so no matter how spiritual you are you always need someone near you to talk to you and tell you some truth. Sometimes it'll be your wife. Often it is, [second Holy 00.34.05] Spirit you know? They can see things you don't see and if you welcome that input and feedback you could change a lot. I know I have over the years, changed a lot. I had to wake up my ideas on a whole number of things, see? So you have to have relationships.

Notice with Lazarus he got a miracle and he was brought into new life, but it took others to unwrap him and so here's the thing. One of the keys to you growing and changing is you must have relationships which stimulate growth, so I don't like being in a group which is a social club. I can just go in and visit a group and have a bit of a social time, that's wonderful, but I really need to be with people that stimulate me to grow. Have you connected in that kind of way? If you're in a team are you welcoming connections that will help you and stimulate you to grow? You've got to welcome it into your world. You welcome it. People can do it but you've got to welcome it, otherwise they get a bit nervous about it because you suddenly turn into a monster the moment someone says something to you. That's not very helpful you know.

Okay then and here's another couple of things. Be courageous and face truth. Be courageous and face the painful truth. In Proverbs 28:13 it says if you cover your sins you shall not prosper, but if you confess and forsake them you find mercy [if you cover them. 00.35.23] So if we cover our failures everyone sees them anyway. Cover your weaknesses, hey, people aren't silly, they see them anyway. If you cover up stuff it's seen. It always has an effect in your life. The Bible says if you cover it up or conceal it or clothe it, dress it up so it looks better than it really is; if you try and have a life that's a pretence you can't prosper or go forward. Now believers, we are called to go forward, to grow from one degree of glory to another. That means one degree of believing God, trusting God to another. To do that we can't cover over where we're failing, making mistakes.

We need to actually do what the Bible says to do, but if we confess and get rid of it, if we confess and deal with it then we experience mercy coming to our life. Now that word 'confess' is the word 'yada', the same word Adam knew his wife Eve, he was intimate with her. In other words if I am aware of where I'm missing it and I consciously own that and address it and put it off my life, I will always encounter mercy from God and from people, tremendous promise. Kindness, graciousness, willingness to give you another go, but the key thing is you've got to actually own it so the word 'confess' there is a word if I'm aware of where I'm going wrong and do something about it to change, then I'll always experience grace. In the New Testament the word 'confess' is [homologou 00.36.53] meaning if I will say about my life what God is saying about it and then change, He will give me grace.

But if I will minimise or defend myself or cover the thing, or try and say it's better than it is, if I will do that I won't find grace. I won't prosper at all, see? So that's a key to growing. You've got to be able to be willing to face painful truth and it's often embarrassing, you cry and you weep. I remember more than one time in my journey being on my knees weeping before God over seeing and perceiving my failure and how it hurt people, things in my life that were broken that needed to be repaired, things that I was lacking in. I've wept many, many times in the secret place before the Lord over those things and then worked to try and change. When you do that you find God pours out grace. God will help you. God will walk with you. Some people say how can he get away with all those things and God hasn't smitten him from heaven? Say simply because there's humility and there's a brokenness and God is working because God's not looking at how bad it is. God's seeing the heart that'll respond and He can work with that heart. God can work with that.

David murdered and committed adultery, lied, did all kinds of things, but God sees a man after my heart; I can work with someone who'll respond like that. Understand that? Don't have to be perfect with God, [you 00.38.12] have a perfect heart which means I'm open to respond and tender when the Holy Ghost speaks to me. When you do that that's when your life can really begin to shift, but if we're resistant and walled and hard and God speaks to you or

speaks to the church and you're just walled off, it's not changing your life in any kind of way, then you're not growing at all. You're not going forward.

The last thing is we need to be able to receive grace, need to be able to receive grace. That's the kindness and help of others, the kindness and help of God, see, be able to receive it. If you're going to grow you need to receive grace. Don't beat yourself up if you've made mistakes or there's things are not right. Just face it, deal with your part of it and receive grace from God. [Come to Him, 00.38.57] say Lord help me now, give me the strength I need, give me the wisdom I need. Show me how to handle this situation. Help me again, oh God, I've blown it again. Lord, I have blown it again, I realise what I did Lord, help me - and God will pour His spirit out on a heart like that. He will enable you to get up. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. In other words God knows all about the fallings over but the Lord upholds him and gets him back up again. Why? Because of a good heart towards God and when your heart is good towards God, not superficial, not shallow, not taking His grace for granted, but when you've done something you realise, oh Holy Ghost forgive me! Forgive me for wounding and grieving, I am so distressed about this. Lord, forgive me. I'm reaching out for grace, help me to change and grow. Help me to learn the lessons and grow.

Boy I tell you something, God will come on that person. He will give grace to the humble. He will lift you up. He will help you go forward and while others are just locked where they are, step by little step you're progressing forward, growing, growing, coming up more aware of yourself, more aware of God's grace and goodness, more able to enter into the lives of other people. When someone blows it you don't stand aside and look at them and cross to the other side and say well not might fault, it's their problem, their mess. You will say God, I know I could help that person. I've got something in me that could minister into them. I've been in that place. I know what that place is like and you showed me grace. I can show some grace to this person.

I tell you when you let God work in your life there's a graciousness comes. There's a grace to minister to others and in the church and all around us there are people every day you meet who are needing God's grace to enter their life through people who know Him, people who have grown, people who have broken through. There are people in this city waiting for you to break through and if we won't take responsibility to change and grow and break through we've got nothing to give them and we just repeat an old familiar religious cycle, instead of progressing glory to glory to glory. I love it and I'll finish with this. David wrote in the word of God, it's something like this. He says Lord, forsake me not when I'm old and grey headed. In other words he's saying when I get older in life I do not want to get set in my ways, I want to continue experiencing the goodness of God and not be full or prejudice. He said in order that I might show your power to this generation and the one that is coming and raising up to replace them.

Listen, what a cry David had. He had a passion to make a difference with his life but to do that he had to become a person of the spirit, a person who built an inner world where there's not chaos and brokenness and denials and coverings. There's an authenticity with God out of which there's a flow of reality to others. We've got to grow there and I know there are many and perhaps you're stuck in some part of your life. Why don't you say God, I'm stuck in this thing. I need to do something. I need to do something different to what I've done before or I'll just be the same next year.

As we come out of this year we're coming into enlargement in this year. I felt the Lord speak a word, advance. Advance means don't stay where you are! Make decisions that in each area of your life you will take a step forward. If I was John Cleese I could do that better with those big legs he has but [laughter] you know what I'm talking about. Father, we just thank You that You're a God who moves us on. We don't want to mess around in a wilderness of brokenness, a wilderness beyond the promises of God. We want to step up into the things You have for us and we know Lord it requires we make a decision to change and to grow, make a decision to position ourselves for those things that must happen in our life for us to receive Your blessing. Father, I pray Your great grace upon my life, upon Bay City, upon every person here to enter into a season of changing and growing.

Summary Notes

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1. Introduction:

- How authentic and real are we with people? The way we act shows how we grow, how mature we are and how we respond to Him.
- Some people have relationships with their pets and their hobbies rather than people.
- How can you enter another's world if you can't be real and authentic? Walk daily and be consistent in life.
- God's plan is for us to grow, mature, represent him, and advance His Kingdom in society, not to be great pretenders but to be real, authentic.
- Luke 10:33-34 - This is what maturity looks like!
- The Good Samaritan entered the world of the broken man and did what he could.

- Jesus still enters the world of broken people to minister healing and freedom.
- The anointing on Jesus – heals the broken hearted – Luke 4:18
- Often people cover and conceal their brokenness and never mature.
- Genesis 3:7 - Adam and Eve – sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.
- Verse 10 - “I was afraid (bad feelings) because I was naked and I hid myself”.
- Adam and Eve conceal, cover up then hid from the painful reality of their condition.
- Behavior = ‘hiding’
- Feelings = ‘fear and shame’
- Belief = “I will be punished”
- What if they had believed the truth? God is Good! What if they’ve behaved differently?
- With the Holy Spirit in us, we need to face the truth and realities, if not we can’t grow and we’ll miss the opportunity.

2. God often uses Pain to get our Attention – How God causes us to grow:

- God allows us to go through a journey to change and to be able to change causes pain on the inside. Change inside and the exterior will change quicker.
- Deuteronomy 8:2-3 - Remember the way the lord your God led you all the way through the wilderness that he might know you.
- God desired His people to grow, to mature! So they could possess their inheritance.
- God’s people needed to break free of old patterns formed in slavery in Egypt.
- God allowed His people to experience pain – to draw out what was in their heart.
- God led them, allowed them to go through painful experiences and to get rid of the victim mentality that faith might grow. Israel demonstrated that they were unable to enter the promised land – if you resist change, you delay your life from progressing to a higher level.
- Unless there is sufficient pain, most people will not take an honest look at themselves.
- Many people change when pain of staying the same is greater than the pain of change.
- He knows exactly what is in us. We don’t, we are unaware of what’s going on inside. Experiences bring it to the surface. We could loose our cool, loosing control. What you fear will control your life.
- The first step to change is to develop ‘awareness’ of ‘inner personal world’.
- Awareness of behaviors, of feelings, of beliefs and motivations.
- Most people would prefer to control and manipulate their ‘outer world’ than explore their inner world.
- Real change requires painful honesty! Change, be honest. The preferred choice is to control the world around us, but God wants to change our inside to influence the outside.
- How do you look beneath the surface? Begin to change.

3. Keys to Change:

1) Developing an Awareness of what I am Feeling and Doing:

- a) John 13:3-5 - Jesus was fully aware (knowing) who he was and what He was doing.
- Knowing = 1492 = eido = to see, become aware of, to perceive by senses.
- He was secure in His identity = able to break free of expectations from people.

b) Jesus was deeply aware of His feelings and expressed them openly. No need to pretend. He was a passionate man.

- John 11:33 – Jesus wept.
- Jesus felt and expressed emotions: joy, anger, astonishment, longing.
- There are 8 main groups of feeling/emotions: Anger, Sadness, Fear, Shame, Disgust, Enjoyment, Love, and Surprise.
- Every person has feelings – part of being made in the image of God.
- How connected are you with your feelings?

c) Jesus was deeply aware of His feelings for others.

- Mark 1:41 - Jesus moved with compassion. He felt the pain in others life.
- Empathy = ability to be aware of and sensitive to the feelings of others.
- To impact people is to be aware of how they feel. To be able to do this we need to be able to be aware of what we are on the inside, our heart, conflict, belief systems.
- What you believe you become.

d) Practice paying attention to what is happening within you.

- E.g. your body – tension, stomach knotted, clenched arms.
- Become aware of your own feelings – identify them;
- when you experience them
- when you pray in tongues
- when you meditate
- This is the road to maturity.

2) Ask Questions:

- Once you become aware of what you are feeling, what you are doing ask questions. Why?
- What am I feeling?
- Why am I feeling that?
- Why am I doing that? E.g. late? Avoid? Putt off? Dreading meeting?
- Jesus entered the world of other by questions, e.g. Luke 24:13-17 - Disciples - ‘What are you talking about?’ ‘Why so sad?’
- Don’t make assumptions – take for granted without checking to see if it is true.

3) Welcome Feedback:

- Proverbs 15:32 - “He that refuses instruction (feedback) despises his own soul. He that hears reproof gain understanding”.
- Proverbs 19:20 - “Hear council and receive instruction that you may be wise in latter end”.
- Feedback = to receive information from others about you behaviors and attitudes that enables you to become aware and make adjustments. Respond and not to be defensive.
- Feedback needs to be given:
- i) Specific, not general
- ii) Descriptive, not subjective or judgmental.

- Feedback needs to be received:
- i) Without becoming defensive (Saul)
- ii) Welcomed as a friend (David)
- When you are open to feedback and welcome it, everybody can teach you something.
- The Holy Spirit teaches in spirit and in truth – welcome feedback and what you can get help from, get your attitude right.

4) Commit to the process of Change:

- i) You must want to change and grow.
- John 5:6 - Do you want to be made whole?
- You must take personal ownership of your life.

iii) Invest in relationships that encourage growth.

- John 11:44 - “Loose that man and let him go”.
- Lazarus needed the help of others to remove the old coverings.
- We grow best in relationships when others who accept us and give feedback.

iv) Be courageous and face painful truth.

- Proverbs 28:13 - “Who ever covers his sin shall not prosper...confess, forsake and find mercy”.
- Cover = 3680 = conceal, clothe.
- Not prosper = 6743 = push forward, break out, become mighty.
- Confess
- OT = yadah = to know intimately, to throw, to praise.
- NT = homologeō = to speak the same word.
- It can be very painful to face the truth about ourselves.
- Become free to share failures, weakness, needs, admit wrong, apologize.

v) Believe in the Goodness and Grace of God.

- Proverbs 28:13 - “he that confess and forsake shall find mercy”.
- Grace = strength and encouragement from God to empower and change.
- Mercy = 7355 = to love, show compassion, have tender affection.
- What does God’s word say about me? About Him? Embrace it. God will pour out His grace.

Note: Adam and Eve removed their coverings and received God’s provision.
- removed their ‘Glittering Image’.

God sees the heart that responds and work with it. Holy Spirit speaks to an open heart. We won’t go forward if we don’t grow. Be able to receive grace, don’t beat yourself up. Ask God to help, guide, show you, and enable you to get up – have a heart good to God. Ask forgiveness, help – grace and goodness will come to the humble. You will then be able to show grace and minister to others, to enter other people’s lives. We need to take responsibility to grow and change otherwise we don’t have anything to give to other people. Authenticity with God is to be passionate and willing to grow. Don’t stay where you are, step forward, move on, step up.

Fig Leaves and Other Christian Coverings (4 of 4)

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You're consumed with trying to control your world. To slow down means you have to say this: God is control, and I don't need to be in control of the world. It was here before I came. It'll be here after I leave, and I am not God, I don't have to be in charge - so I can stop. I can let God take care of the world, while I just connect with God.

I want to finish a series I've been doing, talking about Fig Leaves and other kinds of coverings people put up. How many found that there's been some fig leaves around, you've discovered in the last couple of weeks? That's right, we suddenly find we're covering up all kinds of stuff. The Holy Ghost of course, is a sign to uncover everything; but let's just go back and pick up where we were, and then I'll just draw this to closure today. In Genesis 3 Verses 7 to 10, and it says: then the eyes of both of them were opened. They knew they were naked, and now they made a choice at that point. They had done wrong, they felt guilt and shame, and they were aware their condition was not what God intended. They'd sinned and fallen short of what God had given to them, in other words they were aware of failure in their life. They were aware of a mess in their life.

Now at that point they had a choice, here's the choice: run to God; run away from God. When something's gone wrong in your life, there's a mess in your life, you have a choice: run to God; or try and control your world, run away from God. It's always the same, it's never been any different. When you're in pain, when you're struggling, when you've got difficulties, pressures, you'll make a choice: run to God, or run way from Him, and try and control your world. We see of course, if they had run to God and asked for mercy, they would have been forgiven, this whole deal wouldn't have happened like it has. Instead they covered up, they covered themselves, and drew back from being

true and authentic with one another. They then, when they heard the voice of God, they ran and they hid themselves among the trees. Notice awareness of God caused them to run and hide.

You notice, when you begin to talk about God with people, immediately they go into hiding; or angry reaction, which is another form of hiding? They don't always talk openly about what's going on, and this is a legacy of the fall. We would rather control our life and our world, than surrender and acknowledge our need for God; and this is the core of what this whole thing's about. I've counselled people in these last few weeks, where issues like this are coming up. I've counselled over years. It's always the same. We choose to run to the Lord in our pain, brokenness and need, and discover His way of resolving and working our way out of things; or we try and control the pain, and take control of our own world. It always was down to that, so inevitably when it comes to facing issues in your life, whatever those issues are, the core issue at the bottom of it will be fear and shame, and attempts to control your world.

So God wants us to be authentic. We started off we were looking at the Good Samaritan parable, how the man went and entered the world of others. If we're going to enter the world of people, we need to have some awareness of our own life, and awareness of what God is doing and has done, and we also need to be able to enter and be aware of where other people are at. When you've never let God work in your own life, you don't really have a lot of sensitivity, awareness of people; and notice in Genesis 3 Verse 21, in spite of all that happened God, still made provision for them. It's always in the heart of God to provide for our nakedness, lack, brokenness and pain. This is the heart of God. God wants to help. Whatever you're going through, God wants to help; and not only that, God makes provision, but inherently in God's provision, there is a cost.

Notice He made skins for them: something died to yield up the skin; so whenever God works in our life, inevitably there's a cost. There's something you have to face. There's pain involved, and always there's the price of what Jesus paid at Calvary, to bring healing, deliverance, freedom, release for us. So that's where we've been in this last couple of weeks, and we saw that if we wanted to get out, or make changes in our life, one of the first keys was to just become aware of our life. You need to develop an awareness of what you feel, what you think, how you behave, how you react. Many people are unaware. If you're not aware, ask someone to give you feedback, and then they'll make you aware of things that you're not aware of. You may not want to hear it, but if we want to grow, then let someone around you talk into your life. Make them welcome, welcome their feedback, start to notice what you feel, what you're facing, what you're experiencing.

The second thing is, we have to commit to the process of change. Change is always a process. Although God does a miraculous part, there's the part we have to work out in changing our thinking, owning our mistakes, becoming honest with people. Sometimes there's confession, we need to come free and talk to someone about what we've done. Sometimes we need to put a relationship right, and always we need to change how we think. But then the third aspect of this process of change is, we need to develop intimacy with the Holy Spirit, and that's where I want to go today. God made a covering. His covering for us is found in a relationship. What Adam lost was relationship and dominion; what Jesus came to restore to us was relationship and dominion. Notice what Jesus said in John, Chapter 14. We want to just look, in this one session, on developing intimacy with the Holy Spirit. We need to do more on that next year, but right now we'll just do one, just to get you started.

So Verse 16: I will pray the Father, He will give you another Helper or comforter, that He may abide with you forever - the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it doesn't see Him or know Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. Notice what Jesus has made a promise. He's about to go into heaven, and He said: now I'm making a promise to you of this. Here's the promise: you will not be orphaned or abandoned, and have to do life on your own. Now of course, one of the problems of the fall is, we do life on our own. We build walls around us, fig leaves around us. We hide from relationship, and we do life alone. How many people understand what that's like, you've had to find your way through life, and to really work at things, and find out many things the hard way, because there wasn't anyone to coach you - you had to do it on your own? How many found that? A lot of people like that aye? A lot of us like that.

But Jesus said: you don't have to do life on your own. I'm promising you a comforter. That word 'comforter' is one who is called near, to be an intimate friend with you; so God's answer to our dilemma in life, is to bring and impart to us His own spirit, the Holy Spirit, the spirit of God - not some force. The Holy Spirit's a person. He's a person that Jesus has given to you, in order that you will have a friend, a comforter, someone to coach you through life. So one of the great challenges as a Christian, is to come to love and respect and to be aware of the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, very clearly, that this was the promise that He's made for us.

So if I just identify three things about the Holy Spirit, just so you become aware of that; number one, it says there: He's the spirit of truth. That word 'truth' means nothing's covered over, so you have the Holy Spirit with you, He won't

leave anything in your life covered over. If you will listen to Him, He will uncover the deepest, darkest areas of your life, in order that you can face them, and be healed and restored, and come out into the light; instead of living hiding away in the trees, where no one ever really knows you.

The work of the spirit of God is to bring us into revelation of truth, not just doctrinal truth, but truth, all truth; truth about our behaviour, our attitudes, our thoughts. Truth about Jesus Christ, truth about our destiny. He's the spirit of truth. He doesn't leave anything uncovered. If you'll give Him room, He will come to every part of your life; your finances, marriage, family, relationships, your secret desires or lusts or fantasies. He'll come into every area if you'll let Him, and He will tell you exactly what's going on; and if you won't listen, He will stir someone else to come and talk to you, so you get the message. He is the spirit of truth, therefore you want to walk with God, you have to walk determined you'll not lead a covered life. You'll lead an open, authentic, genuine life - can't walk with God without that.

The second thing the Holy Spirit is, it tells us in the Book of Romans, He's the spirit of adoption. That means it's the Holy Spirit who places us into a relationship of sonship with the Father; and it's the Holy Spirit's job to mature us, and grow us up, so we can receive everything God has for us. So it's the work of the Holy Spirit to leave nothing uncovered in your life that would leave you immature. It's the work of the Holy Spirit to coach you, and help you grow, so you don't remain an immature, self-centred, disoriented believer. He wants you to be a productive ambassador of the kingdom of God - that's the work of the Holy Spirit. The third thing it says: He's called the spirit of grace. That means it's the Holy Ghost who empowers you to do the hard things. He is the one who imparts grace, the strength to overcome sin, to deal with issues in life. The Holy Spirit is given to you, a friend, someone nearby, someone to tell your life like it is, someone to bring you into maturity, as a son of the Father, to reveal the Father, see experiences, love someone, to help you grow and to get to be the victor in life. What a great person the Holy Spirit is. Man, that's only a little bit about what the Bible says.

We need to know the Holy Spirit, need to know Him, know Him. Notice what else it says, it says: He will be in you. Now that's interesting. He said: He was with you, but He now will be in you. That means - get this - if you're going to grow as a Christian, you must develop your inner life; so if you're covering over your inner life, how can you develop your inner life? The Holy Spirit is given to dwell within us. In Ephesians 3:16, Paul prays this prayer, he says: that you might be strengthened with might, in the inner man. So how are you going to get the ability to stand up in life? It'll come from within you. Don't be waiting for some great thing to come from heaven; heaven is going to come forth from within you. The Holy Ghost, the anointing, abides within you; to teach you, help you, strengthen you. You've got to learn to develop a strong inner life with God, that the love of God might dwell in your hearts.

So the Holy Spirit wants to help us to deepen our relationship connection with God, to face the issues of life, so we are able to express from our life, greater dimensions of being more productive, showing the love of God. That's the work of the Holy Spirit, so if you don't listen to what's going on inside you, you're missing God all the time. If the only time you're listening is Sundays, you're missing God most of your life. Every day the Holy Spirit is there to talk with you. Every day the Holy Spirit's there to show you stuff. Every day the Holy Spirit's there to show you where you went wrong, or where your motive was wrong, or whatever; to get you so that you stand up and you walk right. Every day when you wake up, He's already ready to empower you for the day; and if you're going to build a great and a powerful life, you can't do it by just trying to be a good person - it's impossible. If it was possible to live the Christian life just by being a good person, you'd have never needed the Holy Spirit in you. You need the Holy Spirit to give you the energy, oomph and drive and empowerment to do what the word of God says.

So if we're going to become powerful Christians, you can't have your life all covered up. You can't. You actually have to deal with stuff, so walking with God involves developing our spiritual life, and developing an inner life, that can carry that. Now here's an interesting thing. I've observed over the years, many mighty men of God do great and mighty things for God, so I realise you can develop your faith life, and see great things for God. I've seen people move in the spirit very powerfully, and I realise you can develop spiritual sensitivity, and how to flow with the gifts of God. But then I've also seen many great men fall - well that's a bit weird. If they're so close to God, and do all these things, how come they fell over? How come the wheels come off them? How come they fell over, and got involved in immorality? It's very simple, because to be able to walk with God, to be productive, is not just about developing the spiritual side of us. We must develop the character, our emotional area, the soul area. We must prosper in our soul as well.

So if your soul's a mess, even if you can prophecy, over the course of your life, you may be able to do miracles; your life will not produce great fruit, because the way you do life will undermine the ministry you have. It doesn't matter where we are in life, you can be so gifted in business, but I tell you if you get involved in adultery, man oh man that costs you big bucks. It'll cost you half, if not more, of everything you own; plus it'll also cost you reputation, cost you emotional damage, you'll wound yourself, all kinds of stuff. There's huge implications of not building a strong inner

life, so we must be committed - so I'm on about this, I'm passionate about this, because I've been around a long time, and seen many, many great men of God, and they never finish their course well. All that went wrong was there was a brokenness, a coveredness. There were fig leaves in the soul, and they did not get whole; so the great call of God was undermined by the brokenness in their soul. Hence we need to develop a great inner life, and the Holy Spirit is one of the - He's the major asset we have - in being able to develop a great inner life.

If I'm going to walk in the spirit, be productive as a believer, I must become familiar with the working of the Holy Spirit. So let me give you a few simple keys on intimacy with the Holy Spirit. Intimacy is a feeling of being close, so if I wanted to find out how close you feel to God, it's very simple. I just put someone in front of you, and ask you to pray for them, bring a word from God for them; and immediately, if you are living a long way from God, you'll feel immediately uncomfortable. You'll become conscious of how far you are from God, when you have to bring something from God to a person. That's the thing that brings - that's why a lot of people don't want to minister to people. Next year we'll run four equipping seminars. If you'll come to all of those, you'll have a great range of skills, both the knowledge and the practical, on how to minister to people. But in order to walk that life, you've got to live a life open to God.

So here we go, let's have a look at some keys. Here's the first key. Now this is one of the simplest ones, yet the hardest one, and here it is: number one, if you want to develop intimacy with the Holy Spirit, number one, slow down! Slow down! The faster the boat goes, the shallower it gets in the water, and some of you are going at high speeds, and you're very shallow, so there's no substance or depth in your life and relationships. Anyone who's been married a while will realise, you can have no true sexual intimacy without taking time. Isn't that true? Some are like: I don't know what he's talking about here! [Laughter] I know you don't know what I'm talking about! Okay, well we could talk about that next year too, that'd be a good thing to get on wouldn't it aye? Be a good subject wouldn't it? I can already feel the nervousness.

Okay, let's go back into Luke Chapter 10, and it says - notice here, I'll just pick up a couple of thoughts out of this. Notice it said in Verse 38: it came to pass as they went into a certain village a certain woman named Martha welcomed Jesus into her house. She had a sister called Mary, who also - so she made Him welcome - but she also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. Martha was distracted with much serving, so she came up to Jesus and said: Lord, don't You care that my sister has left me alone? You tell her to help me. Jesus said: Martha, Martha, you're troubled and worried about many things, but there's one thing is necessary, and Mary has chosen that good part, and I'm not going to take it away from her. Now if you're going to create awareness of what is going on in your inner life, you have to slow down. That doesn't mean you stop altogether, or lazily sit around. If you're going to develop sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, you have to slow down.

If we're going to love the Lord our God with all our heart, there have to be times we slow down, because if you don't slow down, you find you can't become conscious of the presence of God. One of the biggest issues in being conscious of the presence of God, is slowing down the busyness of your soul, and enabling yourself to become quiet enough to hear His voice. Notice with Mary, she was busy, she was pressured, she had lots of: I have to get this done! I've got to do this! I've got to do that! She was driven by the demands of the tasks, and there's nothing wrong with having a great list of tasks. That's wonderful to have a great list of things to do. In fact, if you're walking in the call of God, you should be a very busy person. Jesus said: be busy until I come; but this is a matter of prioritising, so our busyness flows out of our being in the presence of God. So Martha's issue was this - you notice she said: Lord, don't You care that my sister left me alone, and now I've got to do all this work? Why don't You tell her what to do? You tell her. Why didn't she just say: I need some help?

So you see the pressures of having to do so much, caused her to be unable to rest and enjoy a special moment; and so she was troubled, anxious. Notice what happened, she's begun to accuse the Lord, You don't seem to care about me, and her sister, well I'm resentful about her, and she's left me alone. I'm feeling all alone. Notice the loneliness and disconnection that's in her life, because she's chosen, or hasn't prioritised her life right. So Mary, in contrast, was seizing the opportunity. She made Jesus welcome. There was an opportunity to enjoy Him, to enjoy Him and to listen to Him, and she chose it. Now that's what intimacy is about - it's making the choice to enjoy the presence of God, and to listen to Him personally. That's what intimacy's about. It doesn't have to be a big long prayer time, it's about making the choice to slow down, enjoy the presence and become conscious of His presence, and listen to what He has to say. That's what intimacy is about. It's not a very big thing is it? Hard to do though. How many find that hard to do? Hard to do because it's so much pressure on you, every demand, the demand. So we have to actually practice slowing down.

When you come home, how present are you with your family? Are you there, but you're not there, your mind's somewhere else? You're busy in your mind, your body's there, but you are not present and engaged in connecting,

so children feel father is still out to lunch, he's out at business. Your wife feels you're not there. Why? Because you haven't actually come home yet. Your mind is elsewhere, there's no attention being given, there's no focus on the people who are there, so you don't enter their relationship, they don't enjoy your presence, and you don't enjoy theirs either. You've got to make a decision on the way home to start to slow down, so you can enter your home and enjoy it. It's the same in the workplace. We get so busy in the workplace, we actually miss the people around us that God called us to minister to. We're not aware of them. We're aware of our task list, and this is the pressure the world brings on, and the Bible says in the Book of Daniel: it'll get worse in the last times, so we're living in a day of accelerated pressure, and in that you have to learn how to slow down, and become aware of people; aware of those around you that you love; aware of yourself, what's going on inside me.

Some people, when there's stuff going on inside them, they just distract themselves with more busyness. They don't want to face what's in them, but if you're feeling pain, you need to acknowledge it. It's your pain. If you're feeling disappointment, it's your disappointment, it won't go away. You've got to face it and resolve it. If you're feeling pressure then you need to acknowledge it and face it. If you're feeling a struggle or discouragement, or you don't know what to do, or you're a bit lost, don't just get another DVD out and watch it, don't just open another bottle of wine, don't just do the things to distract you. Face what's there, and come to the Lord instead of trying to control the pain by controlling your world. We need to learn how to connect with what's happening. If you want to find out what's going on, you've got to listen to the what's happening inside you, and become conscious and aware of what's going on in there, so you can talk to the Lord about it, get His wisdom, get His help. Otherwise you just carry on, and so many believers carry on, and never stop to look at the inner world, so they get full of resentment and anger and manipulation, all kinds of stuff, and never stop to look at what is going on.

The Holy Spirit's wanting to grow you up out of that stuff, but if you won't slow down, He has to build a wall in your way, so you hit the wall head on, and then when your nose is bleeding and you're feeling the pain, then you stop and say: maybe there's something wrong. As soon as it stops bleeding, you don't feel the hurt, hey, back again, we're on that rush again; and that's how some people live their life. They're just in a cycle of things happening that never change, because they never stop to find out what's going on. Then the third one, of course we need to become aware of, we need to become aware of the presence of God. Slow down and become aware of God. If you don't slow down, you can't become aware of God. You're not a human doing, you're a human being. You're not a machine, so you've got to love and value yourself, and enjoy the journey. Are there pressures? Heaps of them, but what you do is what counts, on the inside.

Some people live their life - and I'll just put it in a simple nutshell - you're consumed with trying to control your world. To slow down means you have to say this: God is control, and I don't need to be in control of the world. It was here before I came. It'll be here after I leave, and I am not God, I don't have to be in charge - so I can stop. I can let God take care of the world, while I just connect with God. That's kind of deep isn't it, but it's actually where people are. Even though you haven't really thought it through, what we actually do is, we carry on like we are in charge of the world, and we're determined to control that world, because you never know when it'll fall apart! Something around us might happen, so we're driven by fear, and the belief God can't be trusted, and we are the only ones can be trusted with our world - so now when people disrupt our world, we get angry, get upset, we lose our cool, all kinds of stuff is going on, because we are God!

Well actually if you haven't realised it, you're not made to be God yet. We're made in His image, but we can't do His job, you know? Like that movie - what was that movie, that one with Jim Carrey in it? It was brilliant - Bruce Almighty, and that was great, what it's like when you're trying to play God. It really is very difficult. It's better to resign from being God, and say: actually I've got limits on what I can do. It's okay for me to have limits, and one of the things I've determined to do is, I'm going to build my closeness with God, very simple. So how are you going to do that? Here's a few simple keys for you. We need to fellowship with the Holy Ghost, and intimacy means talking, listening and enjoying the presence. So talking, listening and enjoying someone; so if I'm going to be intimate with someone, I need to be able to just enjoy them. I know we have some fast songs, they're to get you from being apathetic. Once you've jumped up and down a few times and loosened up, get willing to get going, you don't need those songs any more. It's just to get your body moving, and out of the apathy.

Really the thing is to actually engage in our heart with the Lord, be able to enjoy Him. Some people are too busy, they can't enjoy silence. They can't enjoy it. It requires solitude to build intimacy with the Lord. Solitude is a crucial part of building intimacy with the Lord. You must have time to be alone, and being alone means you shut out the world, no one has access, you're alone. Wherever that place is, okay, you just choose but you've got to have solitude. In Mark 1 Verse 35 it tells us that Jesus rose up very early. He had an early prayer life, He got up early in the morning, so intimacy with the Lord requires a number of things, but let me give you a couple of simple things.

Number one, you need to build daily time with God, build an altar to the Lord. Make sure that you build some time, when you are alone with God, there's a time when you're praying in tongues, stirring your spirit man, time when you're worshipping Him, time when you're reading the word of God, time for when you're journaling, those things that make up a daily devotional time, most of you are familiar with. But I want to share with you something else that will actually lift this level to another level altogether, and it's what I call 'praise pauses'. So you've got daily devotion; you get up in the morning, have a time with God. I encourage you to think about doing praise pauses. In Psalm 119 Verse 164, David seven times a day, stopped to become aware of the presence of God, and to just praise Him. Daniel in 6:10, Daniel three times a day, stopped to become conscious of the presence of God. Now he managed a country the size of the United States, and yet three times a day he stopped, to become conscious of the presence of God.

So to praise pause means simply stopping, to centre your attention on the Lord, and enjoy Him. That's all it is. It's just a pause, anywhere you want it in your day, to just praise the Lord, and enjoy being with Him - that's all it is. It takes a bit of energy to do that. I can tell you. You have to make a decision to do it. and some people call it practising the presence of God, any kind of way you want to call it doesn't worry. It's just actually. you've just got to stop. [laughs] got to stop for a moment. So let me just give you a few things that make it up. and then we'll finish up. How can you do this? The first thing you've got to do is just stop, got to make a conscious decision somewhere in your day, preferably two or three times through the day, you'll just stop what you're doing, let the world carry on without you. With all its messes, its problems, it does not need you. It will carry on after you're gone, with almost no one aware you left, except those immediately around you.

So just for a matter of input, just practice stopping: shut the door, be alone, just stop for a moment. Stop the phone, turn off your cell phone, turn off your computer, turn off anything electronic, make sure you've got no one to interrupt you. Just stop, so you've got unhurried time to focus on the Lord. Second, you begin to praise Him. Just begin to start to speak, speak language of thanksgiving. Psalm 22 Verse 3 says: as we praise Him, His presence begins to come; so you can actually do this as you're driving in the car. You can do it if you're in your office, just shut the door. You can do it just in a moment you can have alone. Just begin to quietly praise the Lord; and thirdly, you need to focus. The Bible says in Psalm 46:10: be still and know I'm God; so I've got to still myself. That means getting rid of distracting thoughts, and allowing my mind to be just centred, that God is here with me, the spirit of God is dwelling within me. I become conscious, it's focussing your attention. Now that means stopping your mind going all over the place.

Of course if you've got a busy mind, and need to be in control, your mind will remember 103 things you have to do; you've just got to sit still, breathe quietly, close your eyes, just begin to talk to the Lord, and begin to become aware of Him. Gaze on Him with your eyes. Begin to see Him, picture Him. Thank You Lord, You're here, You are with me. Allow all of your inner mind to just begin to focus on Him, and to reach out and just embrace and enjoy His presence. Once you start doing that, you don't need to do much more. You can begin to lock into becoming aware of the presence of God, and then listen to Him. He may drop something into your heart, He may have something to say, you know, just have words of love. He may just have reassurance, and you know all of this could take three to four minutes, five minutes, something like that. That's all.

But what you're doing is, you're just stopping the pressure of the world, saying no to it; and you're withdrawing for a moment, to just refocus your inner man, that I am connected to God, and He loves me. So you begin to gaze upon Him, begin to fix your mind on a scripture, fix your mind on Him, just begin to picture Him as your friend, there to listen to you, to love you, and allow all of your inner man to just reach out and embrace Him, and refuse the distractions around you. Now it's a discipline to develop. Initially when you try to develop it, it's a bit of a challenge, because you just realise how busy you are, and your mind just goes everywhere; but I encourage you, if you would just over the next week or two, apart from having your morning time with the Lord, just through the day, just stop everything you're doing, begin to just start to become still, praise the Lord, become aware of His presence, begin to love Him and receive His love.

What will happen is, you start to become very conscious of the presence of God, like right now, just as I did that, I was suddenly aware of the presence of God, suddenly become aware. See if you just stop - it's the hardest thing of all to do, because the moment you stop, all the noise that's inside you, you become aware of; and so that causes you to have to resolve it, but it's not hard. Thank You Lord, I just thank You Lord for Your presence with me now. [Prays in tongues] Thank You Lord for Your loving presence. I just begin to set my mind to see Him there. He's my friend - become aware of the spirit of God is within me, and I love You Holy Spirit. I just embrace You. I thank You You're there to strengthen me and help me. Just become aware of His presence. The presence of God comes. He just suddenly comes upon you. You suddenly become aware of God very, very simply, very easily, and then God's able to speak with you. God's able to do things.

Dot, just come here a moment. Can you just stand there, just want to close your eyes - so I've just got Dot to just stand beside me. I'm just going to put my hand upon her shoulder now. I'm not going to try and pray and minister to her, but I'll just do exactly the thing that I just shared. I'll just stop, and I'll have to talk what I'm doing, so you understand what I'm doing; but the first thing is I stop. I'm no longer interested in the message and preaching, I'm just interested in connecting strongly with the Lord. I begin to still my heart, and get rid of all distractions. Everyone here, I'm just closing my eyes and shut you out. Even with Dot, I just close my eyes, and just distance myself from her for the moment; and just inside, I just begin to focus that Jesus is here, the spirit's within me. I become aware of His presence, and His love is beginning to overwhelm me. I can feel His presence now, and of course Dot will be beginning to feel His presence too. You begin to feel the presence of the Lord, and the anointing will just be sitting upon her. Someone's holding her up - just the presence of God, she becomes aware.

Now we have to learn how to connect quickly into the presence of God; and if you live a busy life, and you never stop, then when you do stop, you won't be able to stop the noise. There's just too much noise. Remember all that noise is the world yelling: we're important! You have to serve all of us! There's another voice in there, a very quiet voice called the Holy Spirit, and He's just waiting to connect with you. The world outside you will be putting a demand on you: you've got to come through, you've got to do this, you've got to get that done, you've got to - it's just demand, demand, demand, demand, and inside there's one coming and saying: I love you. I've got things to show you. I want to encourage you, you're doing well. What a difference. We need to stop more often, just pause. Maybe you want to do it, just going to the park, just stop. You can be walking along, or just sitting in the park, you just become aware of the presence of God; and as you begin to practice doing that, it becomes easier and easier and easier to be in the presence of God. When you're in the presence of God, then you find you receive things from Him, to minister to others.

Lyn, quickly come, come right now. Just as I looked over to you - just stand over here - I just received something from God for you. You say: what is it? I don't know. All I know is, I got something; so I'm just going to step out now - Father, in Jesus' name I just thank You for Lyn. Well this is what I see. I just see that there's been many burdens hanging over you, and the difficulty you've had is feeling like you always have to fulfil all these burdens and pressures, and the Lord's just going to teach you in these coming months how to release things to Him, so you don't have to carry them. This goes back over years, when I just see like a yoke laid over you when you were a young man, and you felt this belief formed in your heart: I've just got to do stuff. I've got to do this, I've got to do that, I need to do this or I need to do that. If I don't do this, then things are going to fall apart, and it became a burden that has crushed you over your life.

God today, right now, in just this moment, is breaking the yoke off your life. He's breaking the yoke of loneliness and grief, and the pressure of having to do things to be accepted. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I just break that yoke now! Loose this man in Jesus' name! I break the words of expectation over your life in Jesus' name. I break the bitter expectation: you'll never be good enough. I break your agreement with the lie: I never do enough. I break that now in Jesus' name. Thank You Lord. Thank You Lord. Now see he's weeping, because the spirit of God has deeply touched his life, and that came out of me taking three minutes to stop and listen. That's the kind of life God called us to live: a stopping, listening, encountering-God life. It's not hard to do. It's not just for me, it's for every believer, to carry the presence of God.

Let's close our eyes now. Father in heaven, we just thank You. We have become so aware of Your presence, so aware of Your presence, so aware of Your presence. Listen, there may be someone here today who doesn't know Jesus. You've never had a relationship with God, and you can feel presence here right now. Listen friend, you need to respond and become a Christian today. Don't put it off any longer. A Christian is a person who has opened their life to Jesus Christ, acknowledged that Jesus died on the cross for their sins and rose again; and that person has opened their life to be led by Jesus Christ, to discover their purpose, to discover their destiny, to walk with God. What a great life that is. Is there any person here today ready to receive Jesus and become a Christian?

How many people here today have felt God challenge you about pausing, praise pauses, stopping just to experience God? How many here felt God: say - good on you. How many people would be honest enough to admit, you are driven, and stopping is going to be one of the hardest things in your life you've ever done? There's a lot of people here today. Father, I just pray for each of these ones here. Listen, just before I pray, someone somewhere, some time ago, out of pain and distress, you got the message I have to perform, I have to do things. If I don't do stuff, I'll never be good enough. Long after those conditions changed, that message is driving your life. I would encourage you to stop, and to reflect over the next months, where and when that thing got into you; and to actually reject the lie, and allow the Lord to bring healing, and the truth to you; so you're not driven. You're still passionate, you're full of energy, you're still busy, but there's not a drivenness. Drivenness comes from the demonic realm, drivenness comes from the

flesh realm, when we're broken and hurt, and have got fear and pain inside. Look, you owe it to yourself to actually stop and to talk with yourself, to talk with someone, and get to resolve that thing.

Father, I just pray for each person here today that's just driven like that. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we stand against every deceiving demon, we break your power off these loved ones, we release them to hear the voice of God, we release them to walk in freedom from the fear and the need to be in control, the drivenness that's challenged their life all these years. Father, I pray that this year will be a year of advancing and changing and growing, in an amazing way, in Jesus' name. Father, I pray for every believer in the church, that this will be a year of advancing in our intimacy with the Lord, and growing in the things of the spirit. Everyone said [Amen!] Come on, give the Lord a great clap. [Applause]

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