

Delighting in the Almighty

A Practical Guide to Primitive Godliness

Seminar Handout



by Michael Dant, 2016

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Review

Delighting in the Almighty

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Love for God is the first and great commandment. Such love transforms the Christian life into “get-to” joy, rather than “have-to” drudgery. But where does this love come from? It comes from God. It *can* only come from Him.

But if love for God, comes only from God, why did I fail to grow in love over the first four decades of my sincere Christian life? Why did I fail to enjoy prayer? Why did I find myself looking for excuses to shorten or skip my devotional time?

Prayer, Bible study, and witnessing are the keys to growing in love for God. They are like the sunshine, water, and nutrient-rich soil that a plant needs to grow. But the plant of love will fail to grow—even in a perfect growing environment—if the seed is missing.



The plant of love needs a seed. And that seed was missing for much of my Christian life. The Rich, Young Ruler had the same problem. According to Jesus, he “lacked one thing” (Mark 10:21). “Only one thing he lacked, but that was a vital principle. **He needed the love of God in the soul.** This lack, unless supplied, would prove fatal to him; his whole nature would become corrupted. By indulgence, selfishness would strengthen. That he might receive the love of God, his supreme love of **self must be surrendered**” (Desire of Ages, p. 519).

The seed of love is the surrender of self. If I desire to love God with all of my heart, all of my mind, all of my soul, and all of my strength, then I must give God all of my heart, all of my mind, all of my soul, and all of my strength.

When we throw our “gold in the dust, And the gold of Ophir among the stones of the brooks, Then the Almighty will be [our] gold And choice silver to [us]. For then [we] will delight in the Almighty And lift up [our] face to God” (Job. 22:23-26).

Jesus is a gift to mankind. He is a priceless gift. And He gives Himself to us freely. But He is a gift that costs everything to receive. “He is a gift, but only to those who give themselves, soul, body, and spirit, to Him without reserve...When we thus give ourselves wholly to Him, Christ, with all the treasures of heaven, gives Himself to us. We obtain the pearl of great price” (COL, p.116).

Love for Christ cannot grow in our hearts until we are ready to receive Him. That is why the seed of love is the surrender of self.

Ponder

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Key phrase: The key to love is the surrender of self. If I want to love God with all my heart, and all my mind, and all my soul, and all my strength, I must give God all my heart, all my mind, all my soul, and all my strength.

Jacob's love for Rachel made his 7 years of hard labor seem "to him but a few days because of his love for her" (Genesis 29:20).

"and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30).

The first fruit of the Spirit is love and the second is joy. No wonder we should be asking ourselves the question, "How can I enjoy God?"

"If Christ be in us the hope of glory, we shall discover such matchless charms in him that the soul will be enamored...**But a profession without this deep love, is mere talk, dry formality, and heavy drudgery**" (Spiritual Gifts 2, p.263).

"If we love Jesus, we shall love to live for Him, to present our thank offerings to Him, to labor for Him. The very labor will be light. For His sake we shall covet pain and toil and sacrifice. We shall sympathize with His longing for the salvation of men. We shall feel the same tender craving for souls that He has felt. This is the religion of Christ" (Christ Object Lessons, p. 49-50).

But love for Jesus is not under our direct control. We cannot turn up the heat of our passion for the Lord like a burner on a stove.

Love FOR God comes only FROM God: "...for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7).

Most of my Christian life my love for God has been tepid at best. This was especially evident in my prayer life. I did not enjoy it very much and often looked for excuses to skip or shorten my devotional time.

If we say that we love someone, but then find ourselves looking for excuses to avoid them, we may need to re-evaluate our love relationship. That was certainly the case in my life.

What was my problem? What should I have done during all those years of my life to increase my love for God?

The stock answer is: pray more, meditate on scripture, and get involved in outreach. But that did not work for me, and it did not work for the Pharisees. They were avid prayers, assiduous Bible students, and they travelled, "over land and sea to win a single convert." Prayer, Bible study, and outreach can be powerful blessings but they are not, in themselves, the answer.

Prayer, Bible study, and outreach are often compared to water, sunshine, and fertile soil. All of these ingredients are necessary for the plant to grow. But one other thing is also required: the seed.

What, then, is the key to a passionate love relationship with Jesus? It is found in the story of the Rich, Young Ruler.

"...Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, 'One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me'" (Mark 10:21).

“Christ read the ruler's heart. Only one thing he lacked, but that was a vital principle. **He needed the love of God in the soul.** This lack, unless supplied, would prove fatal to him; his whole nature would become corrupted. By indulgence, selfishness would strengthen. **That he might receive the love of God, his supreme love of self must be surrendered**” (Desire of Ages, p. 519).

“Supreme love for God and unselfish love for one another--this is the best gift that our heavenly Father can bestow. This love is not an impulse, but a divine principle, a permanent power. The unconsecrated heart cannot originate or produce it. **Only in the heart where Jesus reigns is it found**” (AA 551).

Jesus told the Rich, Young Ruler to go away. He did not say, “Go and love me more.” That would have been impossible. Instead Jesus said, in essence, “Go and get rid of everything that is keeping you from loving me only.”

“you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (Mark 10:21). Like the Rich, Young Ruler, we need to transfer our gold from earth to heaven.



“If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored; If you remove unrighteousness far from your tent, And place your gold in the dust, And the gold of Ophir among the stones of the brooks, Then the **Almighty will be your gold** And choice silver to you. For then you will delight in the Almighty And lift up your face to God” (Job. 22:23-26).

If Jesus had allowed the Rich, Young Ruler to follow Him without making that all-important transfer of affections, He would have had another Judas on His hands.

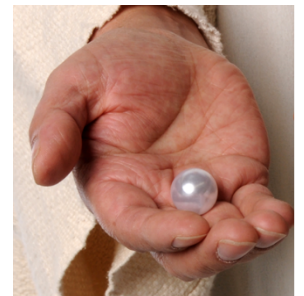
Judas also “...loved the Great Teacher, and desired to be with Him. He felt a desire to be changed in character and life, and he hoped to experience this through connecting himself with Jesus. The Saviour did not repulse Judas. “He gave him a place among the twelve. He trusted him to do the work of an evangelist. He endowed him with power to heal the sick and to cast out devils. **But Judas did not come to the point of surrendering himself fully to Christ**” (Desire of Ages, p. 716).

The Rich, Young Ruler, “...wanted the heavenly treasure, but he wanted also the temporal advantages his riches would bring him. He was sorry that such conditions existed; he desired eternal life, but he was not willing to make the sacrifice. **The cost of eternal life** seemed too great, and he went away sorrowful; ‘for he had great possessions’” (DA, p. 520).

The cost of eternal life? I thought salvation was free. “For the wages of sin is death, but the **free gift** of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

But “when he had found one pearl of great price, [he] went and **sold all that he had**, and bought it” (Matthew 13:46).

Jesus did not ask the Rich, Young Ruler to do anything that He is not asking each one of us to do. Everyone who would obtain the “pearl of great price” must pay the same price—everything.



“In the parable the pearl is not represented as a gift. The merchantman bought it at the price of all that he had. Many question the meaning of this, since Christ is represented in the Scriptures as a gift. **He is a gift, but only to those who give themselves, soul, body, and spirit, to Him without reserve...**We are to give ourselves to Christ, to live a life of willing obedience to all His requirements. All that we are, all the talents and capabilities we possess, are the Lord's, to be consecrated to His service. **When we thus give ourselves wholly to Him, Christ, with all the treasures of heaven, gives Himself to us.** We obtain the pearl of great price” (COL, p.116).

Jesus is an incredible gift. A love relationship with Him is a treasure above all other treasures. But not just anyone can receive that gift. He can only be given to those who are able to receive Him.

Interact

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1. Rewrite Job 22:23-26 in your own words and in terms of your own life. What, if anything, needs to change in your life in order to enjoy the promise of this passage?

2. How would you explain to a friend how the **free** gift of eternal life costs us everything?



3. Why is it so wonderful (and important) to love Jesus with all of our heart, all of our mind, all of our soul, and all of our strength?
4. Ellen White tells us that “Self-surrender is the substance of the teachings of Christ” (DA p. 523). If that is true, then why do you suppose it took me over thirty years after my baptism to learn the truth about surrender? What can we do to teach this fundamental truth to others more effectively?

Note

Review

Enjoying God to the Fullest

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“...you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30). According to Jesus, “This is the great and foremost commandment” (Matthew 22:38).

And rightly so. Such love transforms the Christian life. It gives us a relish for God—and for His ways. With this love, our relationship with Jesus becomes a “get-to” joy. But this commandment to love God with every bit of our being is impossible for us to obey directly. Only God can give us such love.

And the seed of that love is the surrender of self. Only when we give God all of our heart, all of our mind, all of our soul, and all of our strength, can we love Him with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength. Only when we throw our “gold in the dust, And the gold of Ophir among the stones of the brooks,” will the Almighty be our “gold And choice silver” to us. For then we “will delight in the Almighty And lift up [our] face to God.” (Job. 22:23-26).

That sounds good, but how does it work in my day-to-day experience? How, in practical terms, can I leave my worldly gold in the dust, and store up treasure in heaven? The key is in my daily choices.

Choices are some of our greatest possessions. To many, they are the “gold of Ophir” that we find so difficult to relinquish. Letting God choose His choices over our own can be excruciatingly difficult. But His choices are good. Every one of His commands is a gift, wrapped in love and tied with a bow of grace. There is no downside to obeying Him.

Every one of God’s choices is good. It is good for us, and it is good for others. When we choose God’s good choices, blessings result. Although these blessings are not always easy or comfortable or pleasurable, they do always bring true joy, peace, and satisfaction.

But, it is important for every Christian to remember that our obedience does not purchase God’s blessings. We do not convince God to be good to us by obeying Him. Obedience is not WHY God blesses me, it is HOW He blesses me. There is a simple cause and effect relationship between going God’s way and reaping blessed results.

Those blessings include temporal physical, mental, social, and moral health. But even greater than these temporal blessings are the spiritual good things that come through obeying God. These include enhanced prayer, growing faith—and most wonderful of all—a flourishing love for Jesus. “If you keep My commandments,” Jesus proclaims, “you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love” (John 15:10).

Enjoying God is like drinking orange juice. Depending on what we eat before it, the juice can be delightfully sweet, or it can be distastefully sour. In the same way, by our choices we get to choose how sweet Jesus is to us.

Ponder

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Key Phrase: Obedience is not **WHY** God blesses me. It is **HOW** He blesses me. By my choices I get to choose how sweet Jesus is to me.

“If salvation is a free gift of God, and does not come by works, then **why does God require obedience?**”



Some of the 1,050 New Testament commands

Love your enemies (Matthew 5:44)

Be glad in persecution (Matthew 5:12)

Be content with your wages (Luke 3:14)

Do all to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:13)

Endure hardship (2 Timothy 4:5)

Give cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Be patient toward all people (1 Thess. 5:14)

Keep yourself pure (1 Timothy 5:22)

Flee hurtful lusts (1 Timothy 6:9-11)

Deny yourself (Matthew 6:24)

Our obedience is clearly important to God. But why?

“We hear a great deal about faith, but we need to hear a great deal more about works” (1SM, p. 382).

When God loaded down ancient Israel with commandments and laws, He didn’t do it TO them. He did it FOR them.

“All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 28:2).

Read Deuteronomy 28:1-14. First half of the chapter contains the blessings of obedience. Last half of the chapter has the curses of disobedience.

“Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, **that it may be well** with them and with their sons forever!” (Deuteronomy 5:29).

“Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will **enjoy** the fruit of their deeds” (Isaiah 3:10).

“...he who finds me [wisdom] finds life and obtains favor from the Lord. But he who sins against me **injures himself...**” (Proverbs 8:35-36).

“If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them” (John 13:17).



“The human family is suffering because of transgression of the laws of God. The Lord desires that men shall be led to understand the cause of their suffering and the only way to find relief. He desires them to see that their well-being, physical, mental, and moral, depends upon their obedience to His law” (Councils on Health p. 206). We sometimes let the devil give obedience a bad name. Christmas analogy – “Aww, do I really have to go downstairs and open my presents?”

Obedience is not **WHY** God blesses me. It is **HOW** He blesses me.

Definition of disobedience: Disobedience is choosing choices that we know are not God’s choices. “Therefore, to one who **knows** the right thing to do and does not do it, **to him it is sin**” (James 4:17).

Can I say, "Thanks, but no thanks" to God? Can I refuse a blessing of obedience if I am willing to accept the consequences?

Ice cream sundae illustration – I want it. I accept the consequences. Is it okay to eat it?

Sometimes we are too nonchalant in our decision making. Why wouldn't we want to align ourselves as closely as possible to God's perfect will? Everything He wants for us is good. There is no downside to Spirit-inspired, love-motivated, careful obedience.

Sierra Leone illustration. Why do we eat something that has unwanted calories and fat and that we know is unhealthy? The answer should not be, "because it tastes good." God has given us many healthy things that taste good.

Obedience is God's gift to mankind. Every command is a good thing for us. Obedience is:

- a temporal blessing (healthy physically, socially, emotionally, and mentally)
- faith enhancing

"Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and **as a result of the works**, faith was perfected..." (James 2:21-22).

- prayer enhancing

"Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:21-22).

- **love enhancing**

"If you keep My commandments, you will **abide** in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love" (John 15:10).

"To know God is...to be one with Him in heart and mind, having an experimental knowledge of Him, holding reverential communion with Him as the Redeemer. **Only through sincere obedience can this communion be obtained**" (R&H, June 30, 1910).

By my choices, I get to choose how sweet Jesus is to me.



Disobedience is love inhibiting

"Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear. But **your iniquities have made a separation** between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2).

God does not turn His back on us. We turn our backs on Him. When Adam and Eve sinned, who hid from Whom? And Who came running to help?

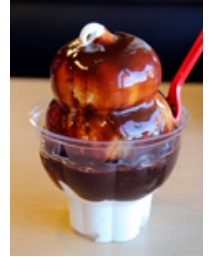
"If you keep My commandments, you will **abide in My Love**; ...These things I have spoken to you so that My **joy** may be in you, and that **your joy may be made full**" (John 15:10-11).

Interact

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1. Do you think that we, as modern-day Christians, take our power of choice for granted? Can you think of any such choices in your own life? What can you do to start taking your power of choice more seriously?



2. In your own words, how would you respond to the question, "If salvation is a free gift of God, and does not come by works, then why does God require obedience?"

3. What does it mean that "by our choices we get to choose how sweet Jesus is to us?"

4. Why do you think we obey God so reluctantly? Why do we grudgingly receive God's magnificent gifts?

Note