

The Willingness to Love

by Carter Conlon

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a willingness to love others as Christ loves us, which requires trusting God and having a deep inner trust that He is in control of the situation.

Duration: 41:17

Scripture: John 15:1

Topics: "Gods Love", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

This sermon focuses on the willingness to love as demonstrated in John chapter 15. The speaker emphasizes the importance of allowing God's love to flow through us, even when it's challenging, and highlights the need to bring our shortcomings and grievances to God for transformation. The message underscores the power of Christ's love working in and through us, leading to fullness of joy and a transformation in how we relate to others.

Transcript

Praise God. John chapter 15, please, if you go there with me in the New Testament. I want to speak to you today about the willingness to love.

The willingness to love. Father, I thank you for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. I thank you, God, that you are taking us as a church body into something so much deeper, something so simple yet profound.

I pray, God, for the anointing of the Holy Spirit to touch the Word today. Cause it to be quickened in our hearts. Cause us, Lord, to desire this.

Cause us to want to walk in the ways, Lord, that you clearly reveal in Scripture. I ask you, Lord, for an anointing to be able to speak simply into the hearts of all your people. Help us, God Almighty, to understand and appreciate these truths in Jesus' mighty name.

Amen. John chapter 15, the willingness to love, beginning at verse 1. I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches.

He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit, for without me you can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered, and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.

Herein is my Father glorified that you bear much fruit, so shall you be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Continue ye in my love.

If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Greater love is no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord does, or doeth.

But I've called you friends. For all things that I've heard of my Father, I have made known unto you. You've not chosen me, but I've chosen you, and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

These things I command you, that you love one another. I want to speak to you about the willingness to love. Now folks, I have to be honest with you.

I am a student of this as much as you are today. I feel like the Apostle Paul in even addressing this topic saying, well, leaving the past behind, I press on towards the high mark of the calling of God in Christ Jesus. It's not easy to love people.

I didn't love anybody before I got saved. I didn't love myself. I didn't love anybody.

I didn't trust anybody. Then I got saved, and I trusted everybody. And I didn't get very far with that, and found out that I thought all people were honest in the house of God, and loving and kind, would never say anything harsh, wouldn't backstab, and I didn't get very far in that, and then I reverted to trusting a few some of the time.

It's been a battle in my life to love the way Christ has called me to love. You see in the scriptures very clearly, he said, greater love has no man than this, than a man lay down his life for his friends. It implies a complete giving of ourselves for other people, irrespective of whether or not there's any reciprocation, if it comes back our way, or it doesn't.

And he says, if you do these things, my joy will be in you, and your joy will be full. And he takes it even another step and says, this is not a suggestion, this is the 11th commandment as it is. You know there's 11 commandments.

I give you a new command, he said, that you love one another as I have loved you. Now quite often, if you are like I am, when you hear a message like this in church, you get all inspired. You run to an altar, there's this overflowing feeling of, I'm going to love everybody.

I love you, and I love you, and I love you, and we start loving everybody. We walk out of the church, we get to the corner of Broadway, we love everybody. We give five bucks to the poor guy that's begging outside on the corner.

We walk down, we get to 52nd, 53rd, we meet some nasty person, and all of our love just begins. It's now down to 90 percent. We get to Monday morning, we're down to 75.

By Tuesday, we're down to 60. By Thursday, we're gasping, we have to come to Thursday night prayer. By Friday, we want to kill the person who works next to us in the office.

And then by Sunday, we're back in church completely condemned, feeling this is utterly hopeless. How am I ever going to do this? How am I ever going to love people the way Christ loves me? It's hopeless, really, apart from the beginning of the chapter in John 15, where he says, if you abide in me and I abide in you, it requires another nature. It requires me to just open my heart and say, God, you've got to come and do in me what I can't do.

I can't love. You know, there's a lot of things you can do in the natural. There are certain behaviors that you can alter in the natural.

There are certain sins or habits that you have walked away from legitimately before you even became a Christian. So there are things that we can walk away from, and we can do it in the natural. But there's a certain thing we can't walk into in the natural.

We cannot love the way Christ loves us. It's an impossibility. I can't do it.

You can't do it. There's nobody in this place that can do it. It has to be Christ in us.

There has to be this newness of life and this newness of nature flowing in us and through us. Jesus said in Matthew 24, 12, iniquity is going to abound in the last days, and it is abounding. Every day is just bringing a new disclosure of another corruption, incredible betrayal at every level in society.

Greed and self-focus has taken over our generation to the exclusion of other people. You can see this self-focus. And he says, because of this iniquity abounding, the love of many shall wax cold.

That agape love, that's really what it means. It's that love that caused God to become a man, come into the world, and be given for our sins. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

And he says, this love, this giving love of ourselves is going to wax cold. There's going to be a breakdown in family affection. We're seeing it in our generation.

Ultimately, we're moving to a lawlessness that's going to stagger the imagination of even the most skeptical people. And this love waxing cold means to refrigerate with cold air. That's actually what the definition is.

It means to blow cold air on something. Folks, I dare not stand in this pulpit if I'm not willing to be what God calls me to be, or I will just refrigerate you as it is. There'll be an animation coming out of my mouth, but it will produce a coldness in your heart, and a strange inexplicable coldness that causes your heart not to burn for the things of God, and ultimately lose total focus of what the kingdom of God is about.

And I think we live in a generation that has largely lost its focus. The theological focus, and you've heard me speak it probably a hundred times from this pulpit, but the theological focus of our generation at some point years ago turned inward. And we became, as a church body at large, victimized as it is by the same spirit that's in society today.

Theological self-focus is the route to deception in the church of Jesus Christ. This passionate breath of God for the souls of men that we see in John 3 16 will be less and less felt on the earth as the last days come upon us. As Paul says in 2 Timothy chapter 3, even that which professes to be the church will be preoccupied with itself, and this preoccupation will only bring forth a passionless deadening religion.

Now in contrast to this, Jesus Christ speaks about in John 15 of finding a source of meaning in our lives in the love of God. And in verse 11 talks about that there will be joy come because of this. It's it's it's almost an oxymoron in a sense.

Giving ourselves, whether or not we are trampled by the people that we're giving ourselves to, the Lord says will produce joy in you. Now we think that going into seclusion produces joy, or creating a three-foot circle around ourselves that we will allow a select few to get maybe marginally within, and we think that will bring us joy. Look if I could just keep everybody away from me I'm going to be happy.

How many, I don't want to see your hands, but I know there's people like that in this sanctuary today. Just stay away from me and let me worship God. Stay out of my circle.

Don't bug me. Don't look at me. And when it's over don't talk to me.

And I can walk out and I'll be so happy, so filled with joy. Wouldn't it be wonderful if it just wasn't for people? I would really enjoy church. But Jesus speaks about this joy that comes because we choose to be given for others.

And it finds its, that's where it finds its greatest expression. It's in the complete giving of ourselves for the good of others. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I've loved you.

Greater love has no man than this, than a man lay down his life for his friends. Yeah, it's preached easily. It's hard to live.

It's hard. You know it's hard. It's hard to love people who don't reciprocate it.

It's hard to love the person that you know is speaking about you behind your back. It's hard to be given, but yet it's a command of God. And the inference is clear.

If we will not obey this command we move to an absence of joy. We move into a religiousness that becomes cold because ultimately Christianity is about God giving himself for us. And we are supposed to be the ambassadors of that heart of God in the church first and secondarily into the world.

We're supposed to be the ambassadors of that very fact that God gave himself to the last drop of blood on a cross. This is supposed to be the sign to the world that we truly are of another spirit. We truly do represent God, but how do we do this? Like I don't, I'm not interested in you and I coming to an altar and having a kind of a flash in the pan experience of love going out and it doesn't last.

What's the practical outworking of this? How is the love of God to be expressed through my life? Now folks, realistically, if you think I can explain it all to you, I can't. How do I explain the love of God? It's like if

I'm going to an ocean, I'm taking a thimble, taking out a scoop of water and trying to explain to you what the ocean looks like. You and I will never fully realize or understand the love of God until we actually stand in heaven.

And the Bible says that we will know as we are known. No wonder if we have such a thing as a crown on our head we will take it off immediately and throw it at his feet. When we see the incredible depths of this love, I was praying, I said, God, if you want me to speak on this, you got to just show me some practical ways.

How did Jesus love those around him? How did he love? Because he commanded. He said, now you've walked with me, you've seen my love, now I want you to love the way I love. I want you to love others the way I love you.

So I prayed. Obviously this is not all inclusive. It can be just a starting point, I guess, for some of us.

But here's, go back to John chapter 11 with me, please. I want to show you just a couple of practical ways that we can learn to love others as Christ loves us. John chapter 11 in verse 3, their sister sent to him and said, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

You love this man. They knew that Jesus loved Lazarus and they sent word to him and said, the man that you love is sick. Verse 6 says, when he heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

Now that's amazing. Now remember, agape love does not give somebody what they think they need. Agape love gives people what God knows that is necessary in this situation.

Now being one in mind with his father, he knew that a higher purpose was at work and this purpose had to be fully realized before he could stand and speak in the authority of God. Folks, it's this simple. Lazarus had to die for the glory of God to be revealed in and through his life for his ears actually to be open.

I think of truly loving somebody is having this deep inner trust in God that no matter what they are going through, that God is in control of the situation, that God is going to be glorified. A lot of times we circumvent the work of God by rushing into somebody's life too soon. We try to badger our husband or wife into walking with God instead of doing what the scripture says.

Remember Peter said, if a wife, if you have a husband that is not walking with God, let him be one through your silence and your quiet confidence in God. And it's funny, we know this and that's what the love of God is. It's the willingness to back away and say, God, I love this person.

I want this person to walk with you now. Lord, you've got to show me how you're doing this. You have to give me the grace not to try to be God in this person's life, but to back away from this situation and believe that something in this person has to die before they're going to be able to hear the voice of God, before their feet are going to get up and begin to walk towards that one that is calling them into eternal life.

True love moves throughout the day with an understanding and a compassion, not compulsion. If I love you, there's a time to speak and there's a time to be silent. There's a time to have an opinion.

There's a time to say nothing. There's a time to let the Holy Spirit say, the door is not open. Don't speak in this situation.

There's a death at work here. I'm taking this person to a place and in that place, it's going to look hopeless and everyone around him or her is going to think it looks hopeless. Then at the appropriate time, when all else seems to be gone and everybody but God may even have lost hope, God says, I'm going to give you a word and you're going to speak that word.

Your son or daughter are going to come out of the grave and they're going to walk towards the voice of God being spoken through you and you'll find them in church. You'll see their hands raised in the air. If you will trust me with them in the future, if you will love them as I have loved you, if you have the courage to trust God, the courage to stop speaking.

The Bible says, a fool is known by his many words, the courage to back away and say, God, I have put this person into your hands and I am entrusting this to you and no matter what it looks like to my eyes, no matter what I hear with my ears, no matter what any voice around is saying, I have entrusted this into your hands and I believe that God Almighty, you will call this person at the appropriate time out of the grave of their experience or wherever it is that they're living. True love has this ability. I love that.

I love the practicality of the fact that everyone is saying, oh Jesus, you got to go now, you got to go now, we got to go now. Lazarus is sick and everyone on the other end is waiting, waiting, waiting and he just stays where he is and lets him die. I command you, he said, to love one another as I have loved you.

He whom thou lovest is sick. I guess the bottom line of this particular point is just be quiet, be still and know that I am God. Be still.

When you pray, believe. I'll put a word into your heart and at the appropriate season. You see, it's in quietness and confidence, he said to the people through Isaiah the prophet, that your strength would have been found but you wouldn't come there.

So many people today are running around in the body of Christ just as nervous and just as fearful as the people in the world about everything and it brings no glory to God whatsoever. It's the quietness and confidence in God that what he said he will do, he will do. Paul spoke to the jailer and he said, believe you will be saved and your house.

I see no evidence in scripture that the jailer had much to say. He went home, bathed the wounds of Paul, most likely such a changed man that his sons and daughters were stunned when they saw this hard man turn to the compassion of God that was now flowing through his hands and through his voice and in seeing this compassion of God, in seeing this confidence, in seeing this new strength given to their father, they turned and praise be to God. The glory of God was manifested in that home.

Thank you Jesus. John chapter 13 and verse 23 at the last supper, the scripture says, leaning on the bosom of Jesus was one of his disciples whom Jesus loved. Now I'm going to instances in the scripture where it specifically says that Jesus loved this particular, we know he loved all of humanity, but these particular people the scripture says he loved them.

Leaning on his chest at the last supper is one of his disciples whom Jesus loved. Here's the point, loving is Christ's love is letting people in close who for whatever reason just need somebody to lean upon. This is where it gets hard.

Psalms 55, listen to what David says, if it was an enemy that reproached me I could have borne it, but it was you, it was my friend, it was my counsel, it was my guide. We walked into the house together in

company. If it was an enemy, he said I could have borne it, but it was a wound so deep.

To let people in close is to become vulnerable. To love is Christ love is to become vulnerable. Folks at the table there were people that were going to do things, they were going to say things.

People, Peter with all of his bravado and all of his talk of his own loyalty was going to deny that he'd ever known the man. He was going to deny him within visual distance. He was going to deny him with the words of his lips, a deep and thank God not a lasting betrayal.

To love is Christ love is to let people in close. In Genesis 45 the Bible says Joseph made himself known to his brethren and he wept aloud. He cried.

Do you not think it was hard at that moment? Do you not think as his brethren he saw them repeatedly come in for provision and he knew what they'd done to him and he'd experienced that anguish of imprisonment and hardship and betrayal and the abuse he suffered for over 13 years. Do you not think all of a sudden it just welled up and when he finally made himself known to them it says he wailed. The whole house of Pharaoh heard it, this wailing.

There's a pain. I'm not even suggesting that you and I go into situations with a pretended happiness. Sometimes it's pain.

Sometimes to get close involves pain. You're many now. The Christmas season is here.

There's going to be some form of family gathering and for many that are here today it's going to involve pain. But Jesus said I want you to love others as I've loved you. There's the letting in close to the heart can involve some of the deepest pain.

Malachi says in the last days this voice of God is going to be heard again in the church and the hearts of the fathers are going to be drawn to the children and the hearts of the children will be drawn back to the fathers again. Don't tell me for five seconds that won't involve a measure of pain. And it doesn't say to be drawn back if the other person reciprocates.

But there will be a drawing back. Thank God in this church that we have 155 men be on this platform next Sunday which I believe is a fulfillment of what God said would happen in the last days. The hearts of the fathers would be turned back to the children.

Back to the hundreds that we have coming out on Friday night. Many of whom don't have fathers. Many of whom have never had a father.

But they're going to see men loving God and it's not just going to be a performance on a stage but it's something in the spirit that is happening in this house where the hearts of the fathers are turning back to the children and the children's hearts are turning back to their fathers. But it involves pain because you and I have to let people in close again. And when we let them in close one time we were hurt, we were wounded, we were betrayed.

We formed this bubble around us and nobody could get in. We'd have a religious pretendedness. Yes, I love you.

It's great on Sunday morning. Yeah, great. Hi.

God bless you and all of this. But I'm talking about something deeper than this. I'm talking about a giving of ourselves in spite of the fact that it may or may not be returned.

In John chapter 21 when Jesus rose from the dead he was standing on the seashore. He called out to his disciples. He called them to himself and then he began to have an interaction with Peter.

And this interaction was all based on love because every question was do you love me? Do you love me? You know I love you. Do you love me? Do you know I love you? Do you love me? You know I love you. Yes, I love you.

And in verse 18 Jesus says to Peter, let me paraphrase it. He says when you were a young man he said you were stubborn as it is. You dressed yourself and you went wherever you wanted to go.

You did what you wanted to do. He said but as you go get older you're going to stretch out your hands and you're going to be led into places you don't want to go. You naturally don't want to go there but you will spiritually want to go there.

I do believe this is so important today when I'm speaking. It's the foundation actually for getting through the coming days. You and I've got to learn to be given to other people.

That is the source of joy. That is the source of the joy that Jesus Christ speaks about. This interaction with Peter basically speaks about a willingness to tell others what they need to hear but only after they are aware that you and I are fully committed to them.

There are too many people with too many opinions for too many other people. I shouldn't have anything to say to you that corrects you until you know that I'm fully committed to you. Until you know that I will go the last mile to help you and try to pull you out of your situation.

That's what Jesus was saying to Peter. You're a stubborn man Peter. You've been stubborn all your life.

You dressed yourself and you went where you wanted to go. You've been an ungovernable man Peter but there's going to be a change in your life. Now the one who was speaking to him had died for him and he knew it.

Not only died but he had just made him breakfast. He was fully committed. He had put coals and biscuits in a fire.

He'd called him in and he was standing before him or sitting with him however this unfolded and he spoke hard truths into his heart but he was fully committed to him. And you see there will be an authority given us when we are fully committed one to another. Fully committed means I'm committed to you in spite of your response to me.

And it's not just as a pastor or pastors to a congregation. It's the person beside you and behind you and in front of you in this congregation today that you and I can say I'm going to love in the power of God. I'm going to love as Christ has loved me.

I'm going to trust God for this power of God to be released in my life in the coming days. In John 15 and verse 12 he said this is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. Now I don't know any other way to do this but to understand that in verse 2 he says in John 15 every branch in me that bears not fruit he takes away and every branch that bears fruit he purges it may bring forth more fruit.

And here's the way I see it. God's saying to us today every branch in you that is not able to love for whatever reason bring it to me. Just bring it to me.

Then he says in verse 7 if you abide in me and my words abide in you you ask what you will and it shall be done to you. I talked about 2009 being a year of miracles. This is where the miracles will begin that you and I become ambassadors of the love of God.

This is honestly one of the hardest battles I've had to fight in my life. But in my heart I've said to God I'm going to bring to you every branch in me that just is fruitless. Every area where I've said this far and no farther.

Every place where I've said I'll give but only to a point. Because I see what the scripture says. I see you're calling me to be given fully for all people.

Irrespective of the response that comes from the other side. You're calling me to be given for all people. And Jesus says if you bring it to me and ask what you will I will do it for you.

And this is the I guess the miracle of the whole interaction. My part is just to bring the fruitlessness of my life to him. His part is to abide in me and to begin to do through me what I can't do in myself.

You talk about the release of joy when you and I begin to realize that we're being given the supernatural ability to love people. And you'll know it because you'll know it's not coming from you. You'll know all of a sudden you've got a new heart.

Your mind is changing. Your spirit is changing. That you've been released to love people in a way that you've never known.

You've never had the ability to love people this way. This unconditional giving of yourself to other people. And he said it is it is the basis of joy.

My joy will be in you because it was the joy. Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame. Now he's set at the right hand of all authority.

Who for the joy. He said my joy will be in you and your joy will be full. Praise be to God.

I see the danger now of an inward focus. The incredible danger of focusing inward theologically in the church where it becomes all about ourselves when the gospel is about others. He said you just go towards others and I'll do in you what the miraculous.

Your joy will be full. I see 2009 as a year of full joy in this house. Joy that's unspeakable and full of glory.

It means I can't explain it. That's why it's unspeakable. All I know is God did this thing.

God gave me the power to love my father. Folks after years of a very difficult relationship with my own earthly father. The Holy Spirit gave me the power to love and respect him.

Gave me the power to speak tenderly back no matter which what came at me. I was able to respond with kindness and ultimately gave me the power to lead him to Christ one hour before he went into unconsciousness and left this earth to go to heaven. Praise be to God.

Joy unspeakable and full of glory. Full of glory. Full of glory.

Full of glory. Praise God. I prophesy to you today that you will come back into this house early into the new year.

Nobody will have to tell you to raise your hands. Nobody will have to tell you that God is alive. Nobody will have to get your heart aflame after a dull week of religion.

Nobody. You will have been walking through this earth and the supernatural love of God will have been flowing through you. Your joy will be full.

The joy of God will become your strength. The joy of the Lord will exude from you. You will be able to say like David, my cup overflows.

God has prepared a table for me in the presence of my enemies. I have a table. He has refreshed me day in and day out.

He has poured through my life. Praise be to God. Why would I ever want to live life any other way but to be poured out for the good of other people around me.

To be reviled but to revile not back. To be scorned as the apostle Paul says, the more I love the less I be loved. But nevertheless, he says, I'm going forward.

I'm moving to the mark of that high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Glory be to God. What a year this is going to be.

What a glorious year we're going into. Praise God. Praise God.

Praise God. Praise God. Praise God.

Praise God. Praise your holy name, Lord. Thank you, God.

Thank you, Lord. Glory to God. Glory to God.

Glory to God. I don't know if you see what I see. I don't know if you understand what God's speaking to my heart.

The glory of the Lord is going to be in this house. The glory of the Lord is going to be in this house. The glory of our Christ.

Praise be to God. Praise be to God. Every wall is coming down.

Every barrier is going to be broken. Every low place is going to be brought up. Every high place is going to be brought down.

And the Lord is going to prepare a highway for His people. Praise be to God. We're going to be walking in this highway.

Glory, glory, glory to His holy name. Glory to His holy name. Glory to the holy name of Jesus, the Son of God.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you, thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Lord. I bless your name, God, from this day and forever, I praise you, Lord! Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah! God Almighty, I give you glory! I give you glory! Oh, Jesus, thank you, Lord! Thank you, Father! Hallelujah, hallelujah! Hallelujah, hallelujah! Glory, glory, glory! Glory, glory! Glory, glory, glory! Hallelujah, hallelujah! Praise be to God! Hallelujah, hallelujah! Glory! Bring every branch that is not bearing fruit.

Bring it to me, the Lord says, and then ask what you will, and I'll do it for you. Praise God, every person that you are having the worst time with right now, in letting the love of God flow through you. Bring that dead branch to the Lord.

God says, bring it to me. Abide in me, abide in me, abide in me. Bring it to me, and He said, I'll purge it.

If you have a branch that's bearing a little bit of fruit, but not what you know it should be, bring it to me, He says, I'll purge it, and it will bring forth more fruit. And in this, my Father will be glorified, that you bear much fruit to the glory of God, and for the kingdom of God. Praise be to God! Praise be to God! Praise be to God! Hallelujah! At Annex Balcony, Main Sanctuary, as the Holy Spirit is speaking to your heart, let's all stand together.

Make your way to this altar, please. In the annex, you can stand between the screens. Bring every branch.

Bring every branch. Bring that critical tongue to God. Bring that complaining spirit to God.

Bring it all to God. Bring your list of grievances to God that you have against other people. Bring that thing to God and let Him burn it once and for all and get rid of it.

Gather these branches, He said, and burn them. Burn these grievances, folks. Burn them! Let God set them on fire and burn them.

Get them out of your life and get them out now. The joy of the Lord is going to be our strength in this coming year. Nothing else will get us through but the joy of the Lord and the purpose of God being realized in our lives.

Praise be to God! We're going to worship for a while. Just bring these things to the Lord. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, God. Remember that Jesus said, If you will just let me love other people through you, that's really the key. You and I can't do it, but Christ in us can.

That's why we have come to the place where we have to believe with God all things are possible. Christ in me can. Christ in you can.

And He said, If you'll do this, my joy, because it's the joy of God to reach the lost and to be kind to the unthankful, to send rain on the just and the unjust, my joy will be in you and your joy will be full. No wonder the religious miss it. No wonder religion is so dead and cold, so devoid of the heart of God.

Praise be to God. I'm telling you, the Times Square Church is going to be known for the joy of the Lord. It will be no place for gloomy Christians to abide.

If you are one of those dreadful religious people, you'll stand out like a sore thumb in 2009 in this sanctuary. You just won't make it here. Praise God.

Now, ask what you will. Do it. Everyone, just ask.

Just lift up your voice to the Lord and ask what you will. He said, You bring this deadness to me and then I'll ask what you will. You need power to love somebody? You need power to let people in that circle? You need power to back away from a situation and let God be God in it? You need power to be able to speak a word to somebody but only after you're fully committed? You need power to be fully committed to that person? Power to say, God, I'm committed.

No matter what they do, I'm committed because you are in me. Lift your voice. You don't have to be ashamed to pray in here.

Ask God what you will and then after we're done, there's going to be an outbreak of joy in this house, folks, because that's where joy comes from. Praise be to God. Lord, thank you that you're going to give us the power to be a church, a body that truly represents you in the earth.

Thank you, Lord, that you will love this generation through us. You'll love the unthankful. You'll love the unholy.

God, you will love through us. You will love in the measure that you love and in the way that you love. Lord, you will teach us.

You will guide us into this part of your life. Lord, you are love. You say in the scriptures that if we know you, we know love because God is love.

Lord, you say it clearly. You say it expressly. Help us now, Holy Spirit, to be an expression of that love in our generation.

Help us, God, to express that love in our homes, to our own families, Lord, to our own children. God, to our aunts and uncles, to our cousins, our husbands, wives, our extended families. Help us, Lord, to be servants.

Help us, God, to be standing as you did with Peter on the shore, serving, speaking, but fully committed, Lord, fully committed, and let them know that we are committed, O God. Let it be a love so far beyond anything that we could ever produce in our own zeal. It has to come from the Holy Spirit.

There's no other way, Lord. God Almighty, help us to love the people of this city that are trapped in a mire of sin. Help us, God, to love the confused and the angry.

Help us, God, to be a people of love in the streets, Lord. Help us, Almighty God. Give us the strength and the anointing, Lord, to be a people who are filled with that which fills the heart of God.

My God, my God, let our voices be committed, let our hands be tender, let our eyes be holy. God Almighty, God Almighty, God Almighty, we come to you, Lord, and ask you to burn every branch in us that bears no fruit and cause there to be the fruit of Christ in us, O God, the fruit of Christ reaching this darkened city in this last hour of time, O God. Don't let this city perish in its sin.

Let there be a glorious visitation of God in these last moments of New York City. Let there be a glorious visitation of God in this city. Father, we thank you, we praise you for it, Lord.

We give you glory. Now you promise us, Lord, that you will do the miraculousness in us and that your joy will be in us and our joy will be full. I believe that.

I receive that, God. I receive it with all my heart. Praise be to God.

Praise be to God. The joy of the Lord will be our strength. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

The joy of the Lord will be our strength. Praise be to God. There are going to be miracles.

There are going to be healings. There's going to be deliverance. The joy of the Lord will be our strength.

The glory of God. The glory of God will be in his house. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. We've got to go praising God. We've got to go.

Folks, we've got to go praising God. Give him glory by praising him with everything you've got. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

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