

# Loving Jesus

by Paul Lloyd

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of loving Jesus and fulfilling God's highest purpose, which requires effort and dedication.*

**Scripture:** Joshua 1:8, Matthew 6:33

**Topics:** "Loving God", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of what we value and focus on in our lives. He uses the example of youth and how their appearance reflects their interests and influences. The preacher also highlights the need for evidence of our love for the Lord in our lives, comparing it to a tree that bears fruit when it is planted by the water. He encourages the congregation to approach the Bible as a love letter from God and to meditate on His word day and night. The sermon concludes with a reflection on Psalm 1, which describes the blessedness of those who delight in the law of the Lord and compares them to a fruitful tree.

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## Transcript

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These messages are offered to all without charge by the freewill offerings of God's people. A special thank you to all who support this ministry. Amen, that was a good prayer we just prayed.

Amen, let's pray some more together. Yes, Lord, that is our heart's desire, that you would pour out a blessing. Pour out the blessing of your very self upon us, Lord.

That's the highest blessing we can ask for today. We pray to have you near and to be changed into your image, Lord. Father, I just pray that you take control of my words.

Make me, Lord, a mouthpiece for you today. Order my thoughts. And Lord, make me a part of that blessing, I pray.

I need you, Lord. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Greetings to everyone this morning. In Jesus' name. This is our last Sunday of 2008, as we know.

I wanted to speak about putting first things first today. You know, at the end of the year, I usually try to take some time and reflect, like has been already shared. Where have I been this year? What has happened? What did God do in my life this year? Where do I want to go next year? Isn't it wonderful that God breaks life up into increments of time? And makes it easy to have new beginnings.

And to start over. Every week is a new beginning. Every day is a new beginning.

His mercies are new every morning. And every year, likewise, is another year. I may have failed this year, but this is a new year.

By God's grace, I can overcome this year. So that's what I have in my heart today. I felt the Lord would have me to share about.

An unexamined life is a risky thing. Did you ever think of that? An unexamined life is a risky thing. Many people spend a lifetime climbing some mountain.

Only to find out at the end of their life it was the wrong one. Somehow they didn't examine. Somehow they missed.

This happened to me in the natural realm. When I lived in Colorado, we used to like to go to the mountains. One time we went there with a group of young men to climb a certain peak.

It was a 14,000 foot formidable peak. And we wanted to climb that. We wanted to conquer that.

And so we took off. We had to backpack in to get even close to it. And then we had to camp overnight and attempt to climb it.

And we climbed what we thought was the right peak. Only to discover at the top that it wasn't the one we wanted. That one was far away and it was really high.

And you know, we were tired. And we couldn't get to that peak that time. We didn't have enough time or energy.

And so we were disappointed. We didn't conquer what we wanted to. Young men like to conquer, don't they? And that's not that big of a tragedy to miss a mountain like that.

Coxcomb Peak was the name of it. We could go back another year. But you know, if we climb the wrong mountain of life, that is a tragedy.

If we get to the top of what we thought was the highest peak that we could get to. And then we discover we've climbed the wrong one. There's one higher.

There's one better. And we don't have the wherewithal to get on that peak. For many people in our land, they're climbing mountains of financial achievement.

That's the mountain. I worked for a fellow one time and he had a sign in his house. Said he who dies with the most toys wins.

Isn't that sad? That was his mountain. I'm going to get the most toys. And the highest peak is the one who gets the most of them.

He wins the game. How empty. How sad.

That's not even a foothill. That's the lowlands. Some people, it may be a career.

They're climbing a mountain of success. Many a woman has discovered in our culture that the mountain she was climbing that she thought was going to be so promising and glorious of being a CEO or a business entrepreneur, when they get to be 40 and they realize they don't have any children, they realize I've been climbing the wrong mountain. I'm 40 years old.

I may not be able to have any children now. And I'm going to get old without any children. That's sad.

And other people climb mountains, mountain after mountain of personal pleasure. How can I get the most fun in life? What can I do to gratify my body, my bodily desires or my feelings? And so mountain after mountain, they try to climb only to realize it's not what it was cracked up to be. And so they look for the next one.

Well, I want to speak to you this morning about the highest mountain. The one that we want to climb. The only one that's worthy to be climbed.

It takes effort to climb a mountain. You don't get to the top of a mountain just cruising up easily. It takes effort.

Sometimes you have to stop every few steps. Those 14,000 foot mountains, you had to stop and rest every few steps. You could climb about 10 feet and then you just had to take a break.

The mountain I want to speak to you about today is the Christian's mountain. And the title of this message is Loving Jesus. Loving Jesus.

There's no greater thing we can do. And I want to speak today about what does that mean? Because there's a lot of misconceptions. What does it mean to love Jesus? What does it mean to love Jesus? What doesn't it mean? What does it mean? Yes, in a way it's a mountain.

It takes effort to love Jesus. A young man came to Jesus one day and he said to Him, What's the greatest commandment, Jesus? Master, what is the greatest commandment? I want to know what the greatest thing is I can do. He wanted to climb the highest mountain for the Lord.

Well, we know the answer. Jesus said, The greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. That is the highest mountain peak.

That's why we were created, isn't it? Any other mountain that we would climb to feel that we've achieved is only going to show us that higher mountain someday. Surely in the day of judgment, if not sooner. It's the highest commandment that we have.

The greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. We're starting a new year. We want to think about what is God's will.

What's our highest purpose? It's closely connected. Our highest purpose, in the term of 2 Romans, chapter 8, with me. I love the unity of God's word And how in this case, how God's highest commandment leads to God's highest purpose for our life.

They go together, Romans chapter eight and verse twenty eight. And Paul says, and we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. What is his purpose for whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

The highest purpose is that we become like Jesus. The highest command is that we love God. I titled this loving Jesus.

We believe in the trinity, don't we? God, the father, God, the son and God, the Holy Spirit. I titled this loving Jesus for a reason which we'll see as we go on. Second Corinthians three eighteen says, but we all with open face beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.

That's second Corinthians three eighteen. I'm going to write it down. And so what it says here, as we behold with an open face, an open heart, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we're changed into the same image from glory to glory.

What you look upon becomes what you will be like, what you value, what you give the highest value to is what you will be like. Whatever you gaze upon is what you're going to be looking like sometime soon. We see it so clearly, especially with youth.

One time I was on a certain place where they had a cruising strip, you know, where they would drive up and down, back and forth all evening, Friday night. And we were witnessing, handing out tracks and things. And it was amazing to walk along.

You could tell what these people were into. They were little groups all along the street, this group over here, these were the cowboys, they had on those hats, you know, and the big belt buckles and those pointy shoes and they all looked the same. They were the cowboys.

They were gazing at something. Apparently, they're all looking at the same thing. You could tell because they all looked that way.

And then over the next place, there was the punk punks. They all wanted to be different than everybody else of society, so they all had the same chains and black things and so forth and so on on. That was the punk group.

You didn't have to ask them, what do you admire? What do you appreciate? You knew it. You could tell by what was on the outside. And we could go on and on.

There was the athletes, the cheerleaders and so forth over in this group. And even like a group of, I guess, maybe people call them nerds or something that, you know, they were like into books and into studies. They had their group.

I'm a nerd and I'm proud of it. So you become like what you gaze at and what you give yourself to, what you admire. We see this in that it even makes grown men put on shirts that have the number of some guy

on it and his name on the back.

Well, he's not that person. Nobody admires him. I used to do that, too.

So we become like what we look at. We have to be careful what we gaze on. Other people, you can tell what they look at because they have on these racing clothes.

You ever see them? Car racing. It's like a whole suit they wear and hats and things. Well, what do we look like? Who do we look like? But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.

God wants that principle to be used in our life to make us like him, to change us from glory to glory. And that's the beauty of what happens when we give ourself to God's highest commandment, which is to love him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. And his highest purpose is fulfilled, we become like Jesus.

So this is very important. Loving Jesus is a very important thing, isn't it? We want to talk about what does it mean? And I hope I can say it in such a way that that you will not forget it, that it will change something about the way you live. I believe it can.

If you'll hear what I have to share here, a few weeks ago, we read the resolves of Jonathan Edwards, 19 year old young man. He said, I resolved 70 times. He wrote down, I'm going to do this, this by the grace of God.

Well, one of the resolves that he said was resolved to endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness in the other world as I possibly can with all the power, might, vigor and vehemence, violence I'm capable of or can bring myself to exert in any way that can be thought of. Now, some people might say that sounds a little selfish, but, you know, that's God's will, isn't it? He said, I'm resolved to endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness in the other world as I possibly can. Now, there's someone who had a vision.

He had a vision of eternity, of what really mattered. I wonder if he wrote these resolves on a New Year day or the last day of the year. I don't know for sure.

Praise God. We can learn from people in the past. Sam, praise God.

We can look at them and learn from their mistakes and from their successes. I'm sure Jonathan Evers is a very happy man today. I believe he found what he was looking for.

Well, what can we do in 2009 that will really count for something? Loving Jesus. What does it mean to love Jesus? We have to define this. What do I mean by that? There's many different ideas of what it means to love Jesus.

It seems today in this day that we live in. Back starting in the 1980s, there was a whole movement of praise and worship movement swept through the Christian world where there became an emphasis on loving Jesus by praising his name, worshipping him. And I believe there's a lot of good in that.

But I also believe that's not necessarily loving Jesus. And I'm going to show you as we go on why I say that, because we all know that we can say something with our mouth that really doesn't have reality. And it can indeed be a wonderful way to love Jesus, to lift up our voices in praise here like we did this morning.

We're loving Jesus today. But like the lover who tells his wife that he loves her when he wants to get something from her or so forth. But then he goes out carousing with his buddies and doesn't pay the bills.

After a while, that love sounds kind of empty, doesn't it? In fact, she even grows to where she almost hates to hear it. I've known women like that. They become bitter.

You don't love me. If you love me, you would show it to me. And so loving Jesus is not simply praising his name in a worship song, although that can be the outflowing of loving Jesus.

But is there something more than that as we're seeing here? Something deeper. Or some people would feel that it is performing certain acts of service, maybe witnessing, giving to the poor, praying for the sick. There's a good ways to love Jesus.

Good ways for the love of Jesus to flow out. But we can do all those things and not love Jesus. First Corinthians warns us of that.

Chapter 13. If we give our body to be burned and have not love, it profits us nothing. If we do all these great things and don't love, we're just astounding God.

So God challenges us deeper. I want to make this so simple today that every child can understand what I mean by loving Jesus. And what does God's word mean when it says that we are to love him? God's ways don't need to be complicated.

We can make them that way. But I believe that his ways are simple. Jesus said the kingdom of God is of such as these, these little children, these simple ones.

Well, OK, we're going to love Jesus. Who is he? Turn with me to John chapter one. John chapter one.

We're going to love somebody. We have to know who they are. We can't really love somebody if we don't.

John chapter one. Listen to these amazing words here. Let them come into your heart as if it's the first time you've ever heard them.

In the beginning. Was the word. And the word was with God.

And the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God in the beginning was the word. And the word was with God and the word was God.

The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him. And all things were made by the Word.

And without Him was not anything made that was made. Genesis chapter 1, And God said, Let there be light. And God said, Let there be stars in the firmament.

So forth and so on. In Him was life. And the life was the light of men.

And if we read on down to John 1, 14, we find out who is this person, who is this Word. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

The Word became flesh. This Word that was in the beginning with God, that was God, through whom all things were made, became a man. That is an amazing statement, isn't it? Who is Jesus? Jesus is the Word.

He's called that several places. He's called that in Revelation chapter 19, when He comes back, He's going to return in His glory on the horse, and it has a name written across His chest. The Word of God.

Jesus is the Word. Jesus is the Word. Loving Jesus is loving the Word.

Let's take it out of the clouds, out of the mystical realm of mystery. Loving Jesus is loving the Word. Is it not? Jesus is called the Word of God.

Loving Jesus. Can that change the way we view reading the Bible? Somebody sees you sitting on the airplane, reading your Bible. Oh, but you're reading there.

What are you doing there? I'm loving Jesus. I'm reading His Word. Jesus is the Word.

I asked my family last night to help me with this sermon. I said, I want you to think with me about the Old Testament. All the things that show forth Christ in the different books of the Old Testament.

He's in there. It's full. Jesus is the Word.

It's all full of Christ. In Genesis, He's the Word of the Father, who created the world into existence. In Genesis 3, He's the promised seed that's going to bruise the serpent's head.

He's the ram caught in the thicket that saved the life of the firstborn whom God said to offer. In Exodus, He's the Passover lamb. He's the rock in the wilderness.

He's the manna in the desert, the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day. It's Jesus. He is the Word.

He's the atoning lamb in Leviticus. He's the serpent on the pole in Numbers. That when they looked at it, they were healed.

It's full of Jesus Christ. Old Testament and new. Loving Jesus is loving the Word.

Deuteronomy, He's the saver of life to those who love God, the blessings. He's the saver of death to those who reject the curses. Joshua, He's the captain of the Lord's host that appeared.

Ruth, He's the kinsman redeemer. Samuel, the good shepherd protecting his sheep from lions and bears. The slayer of giants.

Nehemiah, He's the builder of walls and an intercessor. We could go on and on and on. He's the wisdom of Proverbs.

Isaiah, He's the prophet who loves his unfaithful wife who cheats on him. He's the fourth man in the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. The despised and rejected savior, Isaiah 53.

Hosea, He's the prophet who loves his unfaithful wife who cheats on him. That's all points to Jesus. So many different ways.

Let me define the word love for you. I really like to use Webster's 1828 dictionary. I recommend it if you don't have one.

This man, I think he must have been a preacher, not just a dictionary writer. But let's read what he said. They had some different dictionary writers back then, 180 years ago.

Love. In a general sense, to be pleased with, to regard with affection. We love a friend on account of some qualities which excite pleasing sensations or desire of gratification.

We love a friend on account of some qualities which give us pleasure in his society. We love a man who has done us a favor. In either case, or in which case, gratitude enters into the composition of our affection.

We love our parents and our children on account of their connection with us. And on account of many qualities which please us. We love to retire to a cool shade in summer.

We love a warm room in winter. We love to hear an eloquent advocate. And this is where it really struck me.

He says the Christian loves his Bible. As if it's something common. He's giving all these common things back then that we all know.

We love a warm room, we love a cold. And of course we all know that a Christian loves his Bible. A Christian loves his Bible.

In short, we love whatever gives us pleasure and delight. Whether animal or intellectual. And if our hearts are right, we love God above all things.

As the sum of all excellence and all the attributes which can communicate happiness to intelligent beings. In short, we love whatever gives us pleasure and delight. That's what we love.

I thought about it after reading this. This could be, in a sense, part two of my last message of the sin of not rejoicing. Because when God tells us to rejoice in the Lord always, what He's saying is make God your highest delight, your highest pleasure, the thing that you love.

That's what that means. So in a sense, we're going to maybe define that a little further here. What does it mean to rejoice in the Lord always? What does it mean to delight, to love God? Jesus Himself made it absolutely clear when He was on earth what it meant to love Him.

We're going to read some of these verses. He left no doubt about it. John 8, 31, He said, if you love Me, He said, you're My disciple indeed if you continue in My Word.

What is a real disciple? It's somebody who continues in My Word. He said, I'm your Lord if you do the things I say. Matthew 7. It just cuts through all the fog and haze that we try to sometimes confuse things with.

He was very clear. I'm your Lord if you do what I say. You're My disciple if you continue in My Word.

And He goes on. John 5, 39. You may just want to write these down as I read them.

search the Scriptures for in them you think you have eternal life. And they are they which testify of Me. He's telling the Pharisees, I'm the one who's in those Scriptures.

Just like we read here about all His manifestations. You think just because you have that book that you have eternal life in that. He said, they're testifying about Me.

But He said, you will not come to Me that you might have life. John 6, 63. He said, it is the Spirit that quickeneth.

The flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit. They are life.

He that rejects Me and receives not My words has one that judges him. The word that I have spoken the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of Myself.

John 12, 49. I'm sorry, I missed the one. It was John 12, 48.

Now, John 12, 49 and 50. For I have not spoken of Myself, but the Father which sent Me. He gave Me a commandment.

What I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting. Whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak.

The words that I speak to you, they are spirit and they are life. This is the most powerful book in the world. There is no more powerful book.

There are some powerful books. Charles Darwin wrote a powerful book. It was not true, but it was a book that has influenced many people.

Karl Marx wrote a powerful book that likewise to this day influences people. No book has ever influenced people like this. That word in John 1 where it says, He was, in Him was life.

That's the same word that's used in Hebrews 4, 12. For the word of God is quick and powerful. Alive and powerful.

It's the same word. It's alive. This book is alive.

It has power to change us into His image. Loving Jesus is loving the word. Do you love the word? Do you love the word? Do I love the word? Do I love Jesus? John 15, 10.

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. That word there is the word, the Greek word teros, tereo, a watch, to guard. To guard from loss or injury properly by keeping the eye upon.

If you keep my commandments, if you keep your eye on my commandments. No, that doesn't mean if you never break one of my commandments, then you'll get to heaven. But what he's saying here is, if you keep my commandments in front of your eyes and you make them be your light, your guide, that which illuminates your path.

Yes, if you fail, you repent. First John 1, 9. But there's something kept in front of you that is your guide. 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.

And it does mean to do his commandments also. And hereby we do know that we know him if we keep his commandments. He that says, I know him and keepeth not his commandments is a liar and the truth is not

in him.

But whoever keeps his word in him, verily, is the love of God perfected. First John 2, 5. Whoso keeps his word in him, verily, is the love of God perfected. Hereby we know that we are in him.

Whosoever transgresses and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ is not God. He doesn't stay in the teaching of Christ. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he that keeps the doctrine of Christ in front of him, continues in it.

That's the same word continue that's used in John 8. If you continue in my word, you're my disciples indeed. He that abideth, he that continues in the doctrine of Christ, he has both the Father and the Son. He that loves the word of God has the Father and the Son.

Do you read the Bible as a love letter? Is it a love letter to you? Or is it a love letter written to someone else? Sometimes we feel that way, don't we? I had a brother in our home fellowship meeting who shared that. When we were talking about this, he said sometimes I feel like a farmer who's plowing his field and the wind carries a note, tumbles across the field and it lands up on my tractor. I grab it and look at it and it's a love letter.

Dear John. He said it doesn't really grab me because I'm not John. It doesn't captivate me.

But it's like, well, I'm glad that he's got something going, you know. I'm glad that somebody loves him. But it's not my love letter.

We need to read it like it's our love letter. Because it is. If you're his, if you're saved, if your heart is given to him, then this is your love letter.

And I read an interesting example of this that I'd like to share with you. There was a book written 30, 40, 50 years ago called How to Read a Book. It was a book on how to read a book.

And this fellow teaches you how to read a book. And maybe most of us might think, well, anybody can know how to read a book. That's not hard.

But it's very interesting. He does, it's not as easy as we think. How to read a book well, in other words.

Anyway, in an advertisement for this book in the New York Times, I'd like to read to you what it said. And we all know that a love letter is read very differently than just a newsletter. Right? When my wife and I were courting, she was thousands of miles away in another continent.

And we would write letters every week. It took like two months, I think, for the letters to get there. Might have taken a month, but it was a long time.

We didn't have all this fancy electronic stuff back then. We have a stack of letters to this day. Love letters.

I didn't read those letters very casually. I had purpose. I want to find out the intricate shades of meaning that were in there.

This person loves me. This is my letter. And one time I got my letter from the mailbox and it was the middle of winter.

I walked out and I was so engrossed in looking at the cover of it and just thinking about it that I slipped it on ice and just went flat on my back. Right in the middle of the street. I had something else on my mind.

I had a love letter and I was going to go read it as soon as I could. Listen to this. Here's the advertisement.

A picture showed a puzzled adolescent perusing a letter with the following copy underneath. This young man has just received his first love letter. He may have read it three or four times, but he's just beginning.

To read it as accurately as he would like would require several dictionaries and a good deal of close work with a few experts of etymology and philology. However, he will do all right without them. He will ponder over the exact shade of meaning of every word, every comma.

She has headed the letter. Dear John, what he asked himself is the exact significance of those words. Did she refrain from saying dearest because she was bashful? Would my dear have sounded too formal? Gee, maybe she would have said dear so and so to anybody.

A worried frown will now appear in his face, but it disappears as soon as he really gets to thinking about the first sentence. She certainly wouldn't have written that to anybody. And so he works his way through the letter.

One moment perched blissfully on a cloud. The next moment huddled miserably behind an eight ball. It has started 100 questions in his mind.

He could quote it by heart. In fact, he will to himself for weeks to come. Then the advertisement concluded.

If people read books with anything like the same concentration, we'd be a race of mental giants. When something is a love letter to us, it changes how we read it. This is for me.

My lover has something to tell me. I wonder what he meant by that. What did he mean by continue in my love? I need to look that one up in the dictionary.

I need to find out what the terms are that he's using here. Because it's written to me. And he loves me.

He said something about eternal life. What does that mean? I must do a study on that. Eternal life.

Sometimes we need to remind ourselves. This is God's love letter to me. There's many times I'm sure you and I both have read where we didn't feel that.

We just were doing our thing, our duty, our morning devotions. I think that one of the principles of how to get more out of the Word is to think about it from those different perspectives. This is my lover.

He's loving me and I'm reading his letter now. What is my lover telling me? Getting a little ahead of myself there. But as a new Christian, the church I was in showed a video one Friday night of the end times.

It was the mark of the beast. They had people who were told to deny Jesus or we'll chop your head off. I was a pretty new Christian and I was scared of that.

I thought, wow. But I don't know if I could... What would I do? What would I do if that was me? I remember talking to a friend about it a day or two later. He was just sharing from his heart.

He said, you know, I'd gladly give my neck to the Lord. It came down to that. I said, I love Jesus.

I'd do that. And I remember inside thinking, whoa, this guy really loves the Lord. I wasn't sure if I loved God.

I wasn't sure if I loved Jesus that much. I was still pretty fearful. I just didn't know.

I didn't know what I would do. But you know what? I did love the Word. Because I read it all the time.

I love Jesus. And He was changing me and is changing me. And He wouldn't bring me to that place until I'm ready for that.

And maybe I wasn't ready for it right then. I've always prayed, Lord, don't bring me into things that I'm not ready for. Just stop me.

I don't know how much my friend loved the Bible. You know, it's easy for us to look at a grand, big event like you're standing in front of the guillotine and they tell you, deny Jesus or you die. And to think that that's where it comes down to do I love the Lord or not.

It's a lot harder to do it every day. To get up every morning. Say, I'm going to love God today.

I'm going to read. I'm going to love the Word today. I'm going to read it.

I'm going to find out what it means. And sometimes when we read the Word it's exciting, thrilling. Amazing, isn't it? Many times it isn't for me.

It's just the thing that I do because I love God. Isn't that the way relationships are of love? I love my wife. I don't always feel like it though.

You know how it is. Things happen. Busy times.

Whatever it may be. But I've learned to love her without feelings. Because I love her.

And then the feelings come back. Actions produce feelings. Choices produce feelings.

So it's like any relationship. You're not going to live on the clouds of delight and pleasure every day. when you love the Word.

At least I don't. I've never known anybody who did. But I love Jesus.

So I'm going to keep His Word. Keep His commandments in front of me. Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 28, teaching them, go and make disciples of all the nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I've commanded you.

The same word observe as the word keep. Teach them to observe it all. To love it.

Keep it in front of them. So, do we see where we're going with this message of loving Jesus? We're getting down to the rubber meets the road. If we don't love the Word of God, let's not fool ourselves to say that we love Jesus.

And if we do love Jesus and we struggle with the Word of God, let's fight that struggle. Like many of us do. Let's fight that struggle.

Let's make that relationship the love of our life. Turn with me to Psalm 1. We read this in our home fellowship group a couple of weeks ago. I put it up on a big whiteboard.

I said, okay, we're all going to look at it. You tell me what you see. We're going to look at it like it's a love letter.

We're going to look at it like we never saw it before. Like it's the first time we ever saw it. You know, you can discipline yourself to do that.

To read the Word as if it's the first time. When I first became a Christian, I just loved the Word of God because I hardly knew it. I wasn't taught it growing up.

So, every place I turned, there was some new exciting thing around the corner. I never knew what was coming. And I would just devour it, hours a day.

And nobody had to tell me, you're supposed to have a quiet time if you're a Christian. Because it was my delight. I loved it.

But you know, after a while, I came to know where things were. And what this said. Or what I thought it said.

And that's an important distinction. And, it got a little harder to read. That's a dangerous thing when we have everything slotted.

Oh, this is what that means. This is what that means. We don't read it carefully then, do we? But when we read it as if it's the first time, I've never seen this before, Lord.

Help me to see it that way. Things get exciting again. Put yourself in the shoes of that kumkumba who's never heard these words.

Now he's going to hear about this new God who says He loves me. Psalm number one. It's a love letter.

It's God saying, I want to bless you. I want to give you a blessing. Listen close.

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But His delight, what He loves, is the law of the Lord. And in His law does He meditate day and night.

He said, I'm going to show you what He's like. Because you need to have a picture of it. He says, He'll be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth His fruit in His season.

His leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever He doeth shall prosper. That's a picture we all can see. We've all seen withered trees, haven't we? We've all seen beautiful green ones with lots of fruit.

The tree is you and I. You are the tree. I am the tree. The river is Jesus.

the Word of God. Who plants us by that river? It says here, in His law does He meditate day and night. We plant ourselves by that river.

The river is the Word. Jesus, the law. We make the choice.

And whether our tree is green and lusciously full of fruit determines whether we put ourselves next to the river. That's what the message is here, isn't it? It's not something that God just does. He just takes you and plants you by the river.

No, God does put us into Him. He does do that. We can't make ourselves saved.

But then as Christians, we make a choice. We choose to be by the river. You've come here today to hear God's Word.

You didn't have to do that. You could have stayed home or you could have, like many will do today, go to a football game. You came here, I believe, you wanted to get something from God.

I hope. And I believe. You planted yourself here today.

And every day we plant ourselves somewhere. God's will is that we plant ourselves beside the river of loving meditation on His Word. And what a promise.

His leaf will not wither and whatever He does will prosper. Now that's a love letter. God says, I want everything you do to prosper.

Isn't that what He's saying? Why would He tell us this if it was not His will? He's saying, I want you to be such a person, such a tree, if you will, that everything you do is going to prosper. Whatever it is. That's my will for you.

Your job is to just plant yourself by my river and let it be your love. Let it be your delight. And you will be that tree that everything you do shall prosper.

He said it likewise. Joshua 1.8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do all that is written therein. For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

He's told us how to get. But there's no shortcuts. There's no shortcuts.

You see that beautiful looking tree with all the fruit dripping off? Oh, that's the kind of Christian I want to be. There's no shortcuts. Somehow or someday, they got planted by the river.

They planted themselves by the river. I heard a man say one time, there's no shortcuts, only apprenticeships. It takes time to grow a tree.

It takes time to bring out fruit. One of the things I thought about when I was preparing this message, I was sort of going a little different direction and I thought about these seed catalogs that we get, you know, in the mail this time of year. And they always have the most beautiful pictures you ever saw of whatever it is.

Blueberries, strawberries, tomatoes. And you know, you look at that, it's the middle of winter, but you get a picture of what's coming in August. And so you spend your money.

You call them up. I want two of these, one of them. And we just went through that ourselves recently.

They give you a picture of the beautiful fruit and then you have to pay something to get it. And not just pay it to get it delivered to your house, but you're going to have to do something with those seeds and with that tree, right? But you know what, if you keep that picture in your mind, someday you're going to have, for

your very own, that thing come to fruition in your life. A lot of times we just plant the seed packet right next to them, you know.

You ever do that? Helps you to know what you planted, so forth, but it also keeps the picture there too. Nothing's up yet, but I know what's coming. So God's Word is like that catalog He sent to us.

Came in the mail. Oh, the beautiful pictures. I want you to be like this.

I want to do this in your life. I want you to be like Jesus. Think of all the beautiful characters of Christ.

We want those things. Yes, we do. We love Him.

But there's a cost. There's a cost to it. Jonathan Edwards got radical.

He made his 70 resolutions. Nineteen year old. He had a vision.

He saw a beautiful plant that was coming. I'm sure he didn't keep all those resolutions. You know what? God blessed him and used him mightily.

Many people are in heaven today because of his ministry. Let's turn to 2nd Timothy 3 16. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect, mature, complete, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

I encourage us all to memorize that one. So I hope this morning I've been able to show how we're to love Jesus. Something that we can get a grasp on.

Take it out of the mysterious realm of feelings of pleasurable, ecstatic love of the Lord. Bring it right down to everyday life. There's nothing that we can do more valuable.

There's no mountain that we can climb that's higher than loving Jesus with all our life. Jesus, I'm going to love you. I'm going to love your word.

I'm not just going to do my quiet time in the morning. I'm going to love Jesus today. It changes how we view it, doesn't it? We've all done that.

We've all done our duty. I've done it many, many times and I've never thought of it that way. But I hope I can remember and I hope God can bring this to my remembrance.

I'm going to love Jesus this morning. I'm going to embrace his word. I'm going to learn how to read the Bible.

You know, some people, a lot of people I believe struggle with the word of God because they don't know how to read it or they don't understand how to study it. And we know how it is. You do something new for the first time, you don't really enjoy it, do you? When I was a new carpenter in the carpenter's union in Philadelphia, I didn't know how to do anything.

I just felt like a dummy on the job all the time. In fact, they'd tell me, OK, you take the dummy end of the tape. That's what they would tell you.

You take the dummy end of the chalk line. So I was the dummy. And that's the way I felt.

And it really wasn't fun yet because I didn't know how to do anything. Everything was new. Everything was overwhelming.

But you know, I was a carpenter for years, turned into years, and I learned how to do things. I like carpentry. I enjoy it.

It's fun to me. It's satisfying. I find a thrill in it.

I can go to work and I have a good time. Unlike I could when I was a new person. I aspired to be a carpenter, but I just didn't know how to do it.

So I challenge those of us and myself included, let's learn how to do it. There are materials available to help. There are helps, different things that you can get.

If you don't know how to do it, that's not a tragedy. It would be though if you don't do anything about it. If you just stay ignorant, well, I just can't do it.

I don't understand. I don't know how to study. It's too hard for me.

I'm just not wired that way. No. You can be the tree planted by the river that God wants you to be.

Don't lose that vision. This year, Lord, I'm going to plant my tree by your river. I'm going to love Jesus this year more than I have.

And maybe that means different things. It probably will for every one of us. Maybe some of you have never read the Bible through in one year.

Maybe this will be a year for you to do that. You know, a brother came up this morning right before the service and he showed me a Bible reading plan through the Bible in one year. He said, You know, I said, Do you think it would be OK to stick this in the mailboxes? I thought, Praise the Lord.

That's just what I'm going to talk about. And this isn't the only plan. There's others.

But that just was a confirmation to me. God saying, Yes, yes. I want you to tell them about this.

So here's one plan in your mailbox. Divide it up into four sections of reading each day. Old Testament, New Testament.

If you've never read the whole Bible through, let God challenge you this year. By his grace, I'm going to do that. There's other ways to do it.

When I was a new Christian and actually for many years off and on, I've read Proverbs every day. One chapter. If the day is December 28, I read chapter 28 of Proverbs and so on.

Every first day of the month, the first chapter. So every day I'm reading one chapter. I know which one I'm on if I know the date.

That's a beautiful way to read the wisdom of God. Then other times, I've read five chapters of Psalms a day. Psalm 1. Psalm 31.

Psalm 61. Psalm 91. Psalm 121.

Same thing. Psalm 2. 32. 62.

92. 122. And if you do that, you'll read all 150 in 30 days.

It's a great way to do it. Read a chapter of Proverbs in the morning and five chapters of Psalms at night. It's a beautiful way to work your way through those.

Another way which I'm looking to do this year is to take one book each month and just say, you know, by God's grace, I'm going to try to master a book a month. I mean, you're not going to master it, but I'm going to try to get a good grasp. I'm going to study what's the background here.

What's, where did this book, who wrote it? And what time was it? And what was the surroundings? And then read it through and through and through and glean whatever I can from that book. If you do that, you have 12 books in a year. Five years, you have 60.

Sixty, yeah. Five and a half years, you're done. You've got every book in the Bible.

We've already talked about the one thing. Read it like a love letter. Tell yourself, this is God's love letter to me this morning.

Lord, help me to read it like that. Read it like you've never read it before. Lord, take away all the conceptions I have of what this verse means.

I don't want to just put it in a slot so now I can never even look at it. I can never even see it afresh. But now this is what it means.

And this is what Lord, help me to see it like I never saw it, like I saw it and seeing it for the first time. Well, So in conclusion, let's love Jesus with all of our heart, with all of our soul, all of our mind and all of our strength. Our heart, that means my heart's engaged in reading the Word.

I'm open to what it says. When I come up to the Word and it's different than my life, something has to change. It's not the Bible.

My heart says, Lord, I'll be the one that changes. I won't try to explain it away and come up with a new theology that makes me feel better. With all our heart, with all our soul, our emotions, our will, with all our mind, Lord, I'm going to learn how to read.

I'm going to learn how to think. I'm going to learn how to study. And with all our strength, God, I'm going to get up and out of bed.

I'm not going to lay here. I'm going to see God. I'm going to see God.

I'm going to see God. May the Lord help each one of us to make this be a year that we love Jesus, love His Word more than ever before. God bless you.

Judas had a question for Jesus. He said, How is it, Lord, that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us and not unto the world? And Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him. And we will come unto him and make our abode with him.

He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings, and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. And he that

loveth me shall be loved unto my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him.

That's loving Jesus, brother. And that's abiding in Christ and walking with Him in His presence. I so appreciate the word this morning.

Thank you, brother Paul for giving us that beautiful teaching and bringing it into practical reality that we can get a hold of to love the Lord Jesus. Loving Jesus. Hallelujah.

He is worthy of our love. And it's very real, very practical. Probably one of the biggest challenges that I've faced in my Christian life is this matter of saying, well, I know what it says.

And sort of losing that freshness. And I confess that. And I really appreciate the exhortation this morning to open up the book and the letter of the Gospel of John, chapter 15, as if I had never read it before.

And say, Lord, speak to me. Show me some new things in your word. Your love letter.

I want to open it up here. I'm blessed when we can share together. And hear testimonies and maybe words of affirmation or commitment to loving Jesus.

Hallelujah. Raise your hands. The ushers will get a microphone to you on both sides of the room.

It's a blessing to hear from the sisters as well. All right. Raise your hands high.

We have one in the back that is prepared. So let's take that one first. I'd like to thank God for this message on love.

On what my love is for God. I read something recently about martyrs and how that people gave their lives willingly for a cause. And what's so surprising is not that they gave their life for God.

I mean, you have German, you have Muslim terrorists who give their life for a cause. You have Japanese kamikazes in World War II that gave their life for a cause. But what's really astonishing is that people would give their life so joyfully, so even exuberantly.

And that can only come because my love for or I'm looking at eternity. And I feel like I can still grow in that area. So pray for me on that.

But also an announcement. The Rudolfs have moved to a different location. I know some of you have been sending them letters through the mail.

We have the new address on the bulletin board. It takes about two weeks for a letter to get there. It seems to be fairly reliable in our experience.

Thank you. Thank you. Up front here.

Yes. Just a word on the as Brother Paul started his message talking about just the New Year, thinking about that. I hadn't really thought much about this as a New Year starting here.

But I appreciated the fact that his point was so simple that hey, this is the this is the important thing for this next year is our love to Christ. And some very practical ways of doing that. Yeah, it makes life look much simpler than when I think of all the things that I had hoped to accomplish by the end of this year and didn't get done.

Some very practical things. Maybe even also more in study. Some of the things I would have liked to have studied this year and didn't.

But so simple. And I really appreciate that aspect of it. Amen.

Yes. All right. Others, raise your hand.

The ushers can get a microphone to you. One right here. Yes, I have a confession to make, I guess, and a commitment to make.

I confess that many times I rather than getting up in the morning and loving Jesus, I spend a little extra time sleeping. And the Lord has really been working on my heart in that. And I thank you, Brother Paul, for delivering that message.

And I want to commit my life to loving the Lord Jesus for the year 2009 and for the rest of my life. Amen. God bless you, Brother.

Amen. Someone else have a microphone? In the back? Yes, as I was I also would like to say I very much enjoyed the message was blessed by it. It's something I've been challenged by in recent months.

I had to think as Brother Paul started the message he said something to the effect that an unexamined life is a risky thing. You know, it's not unusual for us if you're in evangelical circles to ask someone if they love the Lord and they say, oh yes, they love the Lord. But if you buy good seed and sow good seed in a garden and it gets watered and the sun shines on it, it bears fruit.

And I just had to think, you know, if we love the Lord, there's evidence of it in our lives. There is fruit to show that we do actually love the Lord. That tree planted by the water prospers because it is by the water and it is partaking of that river.

Even there are places in the desert where there's water on the ground but it's not evident above ground until you get to a place where you see a bunch of growth. Some trees. Those trees have found water in the ground.

And they are living and prospering because they are partaking of it. I just thought that was a good thing to consider, you know. Maybe we should stop and think if someone asks if we love the Lord.

Do we love the Lord? I have been challenged like that of late. I thought it was good for us to consider. Thank you Brother Tim.

That goes right along with the question that Brother Paul raised, you know, where are we planted? What nourishment are we taking in? What are we looking at? What are we becoming like? Someone else. Raise your hand. Sisters.

Yes. I think it's a very important message to consider and I just thought of a discussion I had with an Amish relative that really blessed me just about all the commandments that we've been trying to follow that aren't even much aren't even in the Bible and we got to, we talked about the first and greatest commandment to love the Lord our God and we just shared how that that is the sum of all the law or when we do that we are keeping the whole law and love the Lord our God and our neighbor as ourself and we just the discussion just went to how how can we love the Lord if we don't study and if we don't know Him how can we love Him and how can we know Him if we don't read and we just it was just such a blessing to

encourage somebody to read the Bible regularly so yes it was a blessing to have a message about that. Amen.

There's a hand right in front of you there I believe, Brother Dwight. I'd like to give a personal testimony to encourage the brothers and sisters and just confirm what Brother Paul said as I think of my life I think there's one great regret I have and that is my neglect of the Word of God. There was a period of about six years in my life and I had quiet time and I was sharing the Word with others and all that but I did not buy up the opportunities I had.

At that time I would be in a different community, different town than the 30-40 miles where I lived and rather than eating lunch I would go into a library at lunch time and read for 30 minutes 45 minutes. I was in such a different place now I don't have time for anything but the Word of God and I look back with regret, lost opportunities then but there's some things that really started to open up God's Word for me I remember maybe 35 years ago I was riding with a man in the back seat of a car and asked him a question he said I'll answer your question on one condition you write down what I tell you and in recent years I've been doing that God tells me something that may not seem very significant, I'll write it down and just this week I happened to do something I had never done before but I looked down the list of date created on the computer documents and it was December 25, 1999 was the first one but computers are such a wonderful tool for writing these things down, God shows us because they can be brought back, searched found quickly, modified, printed out but that has really changed things for me to just write down, that shows God we're paying attention to what He's telling us and I'm at a place now where I'm way behind writing things down because you start writing and then just more comes and I don't know how to catch up in the last several weeks I meditated in that passage there in Ephesians where it says Paul prayed, I said I pray for you that God would grant you the spirit of wisdom and revelation and knowledge of Him the eyes of your understanding being enlightened that you may know about the hope of His calling and we have such an advantage with the Dear John letter, we have the writer right there I think Paul was writing that and he's writing all these wonderful things in chapter one, just one word, one phrase is enough for a lifetime of investigation and living and he said they aren't going to get it, they have to have a revealer, they have to have someone to help them and that was my prayer, Lord open this up to me it's been so helpful to me to just look at a word that I've known all my life, the simplest word and say Lord, I don't know what that means I know I'm not experiencing it, behind these words and phrases that are so familiar to us there is a whole world of meaning and experience it's much bigger than we've ever seen and so to come to it like Brother Paul said, just for the first time we simply say Lord, I don't know what that means, sometimes it's even a preposition, what does it mean to be in Christ He who abides in me, and I in Him just two letter word what does that mean? I don't know, but God show me. Amen Brother thank you for that word.

The other microphone somewhere here yes, go ahead I'd like to take this opportunity this morning to say that it's so good to be back with you all it's been a good two years I wouldn't trade it for anything but it is good to be back and see everybody I'd just like to say that one of the things that God has taught me over the last two years is that this thing of loving Jesus gets very practical sometimes but as we're willing to make that choice and maybe look foolish to the world God's blessing is totally overwhelming and I would definitely highly recommend making those choices to anybody loving Jesus is the only way to go, it's so worth it I also bring you all greetings from Ghana from the missionaries and from the Congolese also they're all very much with you here in heart and are sending

their greetings to you and I'd also like to thank the church here for letting me have the privilege to go, for sending me for your prayers, for your support, it's been sweet to feel that across the ocean and I thank you

for that yeah it's been a blessing it's sweet to be able to feel the backing of a church like this behind us so thank you so much God bless you sister thank you for sharing and giving us that encouragement it's always right and worth it to love Jesus with all your heart even though others may think you look foolish doing that Amen another hand somewhere else, another microphone yes okay, brother Adam I just thank the Lord for both messages this morning with the self examination at this time of the year, I see areas that I see tests that I haven't passed yet there's things

that I still want to do this year physically and there's victories that I haven't won, battles that I haven't won, come out victorious but I appreciate the thing of being able to forget what's behind and reach to what's before and how clear this loving Jesus is not something complicated it's before us it's a resolve that I've already made and I just appreciate God's word to deepen it and give it strength, that's one thing I want to do next year and I just want to say that if I will be like a tree planted by the waters fruit should be visible and I open myself up to the brotherhood to, if you see something that is not like that tree I covet somebody coming to me and helping me and doesn't seem like I'm getting there all by myself, I need brothers, I need the Lord, we need that that water

to flow directly from the Lord through his word and through one another so I thank God for these messages Amen brother yes alright we have one on the sister's side yes go ahead I saw my need very recently of not reading the word like I should and neglecting the word of God and I was just really blessed and challenged and I want to be changed too by the message and I thank you brother Paul for the message and just to see that it is loving Jesus and I do want to love Jesus with all my heart and I purpose to have that area changed in my life Amen God bless you sister alright over on the men's side yes I was blessed with this message but also rebuked and spoken sharply to because I realized that the Lord showed me that I I don't love him I don't love his word as I should I'll try to spend

time in the word sometimes but it's just gotten to be a duty and not a not something where I really love him and it affects every other area of my life and it's because I don't love Jesus I've lived another sin I'm really grieved and sorry that I that I have done that that I have not walked with him and I'd ask for your prayers but I do want to love Jesus to love his word to make the word of God the most important part of my day part of my life not just for knowledge but to know him thank you Amen God bless you Shane here in the front on the sisters I do love Jesus and I love his word it's just so exciting to see what truths he brings forth for daily wisdom in our lives and I just thought of these verses in Matthew chapter 7 wherefore by their fruits you shall know them not every one that

saith unto me Lord Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven many will say to me in that day Lord Lord have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils and in thy name done many wonderful works and then will I profess unto them I never knew you depart from me ye that work iniquity and I've just run across people who many people who claim to be Christians but do they know him if they've never read the word of God can they know him Amen thank you for that testimony someone else has a microphone ok this book will keep us from sin but sin will keep us from the book Amen you know I'm not hungry for the word like Paul said an unexamined life is a dangerous life I need to examine my heart but oh this book

precious living word of God it will keep us from sin and it will transform us as we gaze upon our savior and his living word we will be changed by his spirit more and more into the image of Christ I believe we were given the one year bible reading program in our mailboxes today and I want to thank the brother who who minded the Lord you know to bring that for us and want to encourage us to be in the word the only regret

that I have I can say with Dwight is that I have not been in the word more did you ever hear someone say I read the bible too much no but many say oh if I would have devoured the word more so let us press in and love Jesus by loving his word Amen Thank you all for sharing it's very very meaningful and very vital part of the service we love to hear your testimonies

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