

New Harvest Community Church
Servant Leadership Training
Session 1 – September 7, 2010

CHRIST: Communing With God

Key Text: Luke 10:25-42 "Being Mary in a Martha World"

1. Loving God

- A. The first and greatest commandment (Lk. 10:27-42)
 - 1) Followed by two stories:
 - a. How to love your neighbor (Lk. 10:29-37)
 - b. How to love God (Lk. 10: 38-42)
 - 2) You will seek Me and find Me when you seek me with all of your heart (Jer. 29:13)
 - 3) But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord (1 Pet. 3:15)
- B) Seeking God from your heart begins with desire
 - 1) *"For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him and the power to do what pleases him"* (Phil. 2:13 NLT)
 - 2) *"The single most important thing for the Christian is intensity of desire"- Brennan Manning.*
 - 3) Recognizing the difference between the desire to seek Him and the hindrances to seeking Him

2. Understanding the Nature of the 'Spiritual Life'

- A. The essence of the spiritual life is not found in understanding or in external behavior and duty (making a distinction between cultural "Christianity" & discipleship)
- B. Neither the understanding of the Bible nor theology is sufficient to produce Christ-likeness.

"You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life" (John 5:39-40)

"Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Cor. 8:1-3)

"Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them" (John 7:48,49)

- C. A focus on external behavior, morality and duty as the essence of the Christian life can easily lead to an attitude of self-righteousness

“Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You give a tenth of your spices- mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the important matters of the law- justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides. You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel” (Matt. 23:23-28)

“To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable. Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: God, I thank you that I am not like other men- robbers, evildoers, adulterers- or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get” (Luke 18:9-14)

D. **The essence of the spiritual life is found in the heart.**

1. Our thinking and behavior is shaped by our heart (will, emotions and intellect

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life (Prov 4:23)

The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart, his mouth speaks.

For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft murder, adultery (Mark 7:18-23)

Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Cor 9:7)

2. The Lord makes an important distinction between external obedience and obedience from the heart.

Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart (Eph 6:6)

This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart (Matt. 18:35)

3. “The essence of life is a passionate fascination and preoccupation of the heart with Jesus Christ the Son of God” (Jack Deere, PhD.)

For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. (Phil. 1:21)

Jesus replied: Love the Lord you God with all your heart and with all our soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment and the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments. (Matt 22:37-40)

For in Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28)

4. Emulating Jesus' Manner of Life

- a. If there's anything that Jesus consistently conveyed as being the essence of his purpose, his life, and very being was His relationship with His Father in heaven.
- b. A single-minded commitment to knowing and doing the Father's will (Lk. 2:41-52; John 5:19; 12:49; 14:31).
- c. A intentional and practical dependence on the Father for every matter concerning daily life, faith, and ministry.
- d. A rhythm of solitude in prayer (Mt. 14:13; Lk. 5:16)
- e. Realized a need for personal and corporate prayer
 1. Fellowship of 1 – His Father (Communion with God)
 2. Fellowship of 3 – Peter, James, John (Accountability)
 3. Fellowship of 12 – The Disciples (Shared life/ministry “koinonia)
 4. Fellowship of 120+ - The Body of Christ (Worship, teaching, mission)

Take-Away Application

How to Cultivate Your Relationship with Jesus

1. **Remember:** Spiritual activity (disciplines, devotions, Bible reading, prayer etc.) must be born out of the heart, center on and respond to the real presence and person of Jesus Christ. Relationship is primary, while activity (ministry, spiritual disciplines, acts of worship, etc.) flow from that relationship (John 5:19).
2. **Keep the main thing, the main thing**—to love and know (encounter, experience, relationship, intimacy with) Him (Philippians 3:10).
3. **Desire-** Cultivating your spiritual life must begin with desire. Pray for desire and rest in his promises and word (Philippians 2:13).

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirst for God, for the living God. *When* can I go and meet with God? (Psalm 42:1,2)

"I have made you know to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them." (John 17:26)

My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises. (Psalm 119:148)

4. **Schedule** a regular time to meet with God and put it on the calendar. Let others know—family and someone you're accountable to—that this is the time you've set aside to meet with God. Ask for their prayers, covering, and help in making this a meaningful time.
5. **Place** - Find a quiet place, alone. Have a consistent time and place and SHOW UP! (Mt. 14:23; Acts 3:1).
6. **Time** - Set aside time for regular retreats to be with God away from the city & people (Lk. 5:16; Mt. 14:13).
7. **Prepare** for the presence of God
 - a. "Environment First" – Invite God's presence and banish any influence of the Evil One, *in Jesus' Name* (Mt. 4:10)
 - b. "Centering" (or "dialing down")
 - i. Submit to God: Begin with a prayer of surrender – verbally "submit your mind" (thoughts and emotions) to Christ's dominion i.e., "exchange" your thoughts for His and "claim the mind of Christ" and the presence of His Holy Spirit
 - ii. Resist the Devil: "Forbid, banish, suspend" and cancel any effects of the Evil One's presence, influence, and effects, *in Jesus' Name* e.g., Jesus in the wilderness " . . . away from me Satan" (Mt. 4:1-10).
 - c. Ask Him to search & speak to your heart (Ps. 139:23,24)
 - d. Confession (1 John 1:9)
 - e. Confidently come into His presence (Hebrews 4:16; 10:19).
 - f. Ask to be filled with and led by the Spirit of God (Lk 11:13; Eph. 5:18)
8. **Worship**
 - a. We can love God for what he has done for us and we can love him for his character, i.e., for who he is. But the purest love is a love of his character. Focus on who he is—his character, nature, and attributes.

- i. Verbalize and proclaim the names and attributes of God in praise in word or song
 - ii. Audibly quote portions of the Psalms as expressions of worship to God using the various references to His character and nature
 - iii. Use the opening addresses given to God as recorded in the various prayers of the Bible (see handout “Selected Prayers of the Bible”.)
 - b. Speak aloud TO God who is present there with you and in you, for example: “You are . . .(holy, worthy, my provision, Sovereign, etc).
9. **Pray “in the Spirit”** (Eph. 6:18; Romans 8:26; Jude 1:20)
- a. Instead of just thinking of what to say, simply ask the Lord to bring things to mind and to help you pray. Begin to practice “listening” by praying about those things that come to mind as you fix your thoughts on Jesus.
 - b. Use the nature and grammar of the prayers contained in the Bible.
 - c. Regularly ask God to fill you and empower you with His Spirit—literally: *keep on continually being filled* (Eph 5:18-19; Luke 11:13)
10. **Utilize God's Word** - Pray by “claiming” God's promises and His truth (Mt. 18:19-20)
11. **Posture** - practice using various biblical postures that are consistent with the nature of your prayers
- 1Tim. 2:8 - I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.
 - Ps. 95:6 - Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker
 - Ps. 149:3 - Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with tambourine and harp
12. **LISTEN** to God's Word and his voice
- a. Journal
 - b. Test/discern with others & confirm with God's Word
 - c. Step out in faith/obey.
13. **Respond.** A true meeting with God results in some kind of response or change—worship, thanksgiving, repentance (change), renewing of mind, service, obedience, testing out what you've heard in listening to His voice

Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my father, and I too will love him and show myself to him (Jo 14:21)

14. **Practice the Presence of God** – practice becoming consciously aware of His presence in you and with you throughout the day and in each situation. Train yourself to engage with Jesus at all times and in every circumstance. Break the pattern of thinking that confines your time with Jesus to a single segment of time or daily devotional time (John 14:17)
- 15 **Gather** regularly and consistently with others in the presence of God (Mt. 18:19-20).
- a. Heb. 10:25 - Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching
 - b. Matt. 18:19, 20 - Again I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for , it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them
 - c. Meet weekly with 2 or 3 others for accountability, discernment, prayer, intercession, Bible study, fellowship, worship, ministry to each other.
 - d. Ask each other:
 - i. Have you been consistent in meeting with God and listening to Him in prayer and through the Scriptures?
 - ii. Have you recorded some things in your journal that you would like to share or test with the rest of the group?
 - iii. Are there decisions you need to pray about and discern with others (James 4:13-17)
 - iv. Have you consistently prayed aloud and in agreement with your spouse this week?
 - v. Have you prayed for and “covered” your spouse and family utilizing God’s promises and Christ’s authority to insure their well-being and protection from physical and spiritual harm (Psalm 91)?
 - vi. Have you exposed yourself to any sexually explicit material?
 - vii. Have you been with a person of the opposite sex anywhere this past week that might be seen as compromising
 - viii. Have any of your financial dealings lacked integrity (including the stewardship of that which belongs to God?)
 - ix. Have you spent adequate time in Bible study and prayer?
 - x. Have you given priority time to your family?
 - xi. Have you discerned the nature of your calling and are you fulfilling it with those God has called alongside you?
 - xii. Have you lied or withheld the truth from me/us? (Chuck Swindoll)
- 16 Be realistic! Have a plan and Start!
- 17 My plan is . . . (What? Where? When? How? Who?)