

Session 7 Awestruck By the Ocean of God's Love (Jn. 15:9-11)

I. AWESTRUCK BY LOVE—EMPOWERED BY TRANSFORMING JOY (JN. 15:9-11)

A. The greatest pleasures available to the human spirit are the spiritual pleasures that come to us as **God reveals God** to us—empowering us to love Him. We are freed from the **inferior pleasures** of sin by experiencing the **superior pleasures** of the gospel. He contends for our liberty and greatness. We were created for love—so we only thrive as God *reveals* His love to us and *imparts* it in us.

B. Jesus spoke of the “vast ocean” of God’s love—this leads us to be awestruck or filled with joy.

“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. ¹⁰If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love...¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” (Jn 15:9-11)

C. **Circle of love:** The Father loves the Son (15:9; 17:23), and the Son loves the Father (10:17; 14:31); the Father and the Son loves Their people; they love the Lord and one another (13:34; 14:15, 23).

D. Our experience of God’s joy is *anchored* in the intensity of how the Father loves the Son and how the Son loves us. Note 5 foundational truths related to experiencing God’s joy in John 15:9-10:

1. Growing in our understand of the intensity of the *Father’s love for Jesus* (15:9a)
2. Growing in our understand of the intensity of *Jesus’ love for His people* (15:9b)
3. Abiding in love—staying focused on *understanding, receiving, and expressing God’s love* (15:9c)
4. Keeping His commandments—loving Jesus by walking in a *spirit of obedience to God* (15:10a)
5. The result is being *empowered by transforming joy* or being awestruck with God (15:11)

E. Paul used different terminology when presenting the same truths that Jesus taught in John 15:9.

The *width* of God’s love embraces every person, personality type, and rank in society.

The *length* of God’s love speaks of how far it reaches beyond our greatest sin and how long it lasts.

The *depth* of love speaks of the lowest depths to which Jesus descended to redeem us (Phil. 2:6-9).

The *heights* of love include the exaltation we receive in reigning with Him (Rev. 3:21).

¹⁸may be able to comprehend...what is the width and length and depth and height—¹⁹to know [experience] the love of Christ which passes knowledge...be filled with all the fullness of God. (Eph. 3:18-19)

F. God’s love for God that is poured out through His people is the ultimate reality of the kingdom.

The command to love God with all our heart does not begin with us. It is one expression of the ultimate reality of the kingdom that existed long before the creation of the world, namely God’s heart that burned with perfect love within the fellowship of the three Persons of the Trinity.

³⁷“You shall love the LORD...³⁸This is the first and great commandment.” (Mt. 22:37-38)

G. Jesus defined loving God as the “first” commandment, thus identifying it as the highest priority to God and the first calling in our life. From eternity past, God has loved God with all of His heart, mind, and strength. God the Father loved the Son. God the Son loved the Spirit. God the Spirit loved the Father and the Son, etc. God is fully satisfied in the deep fellowship within the Godhead.

H. God is love—wholehearted love (1 Jn. 4:16). The essence of God’s being is wholehearted love. This is how the Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Spirit, etc. The only way that God loves His family (the Trinity and the Church) is with all of His heart.

¹⁶***God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God. (1 Jn. 4:16)***

I. Love, by definition, demands an expression—to be shared and multiplied. He wanted others to experience the joy of Their experience of perfect love. God created human beings to participate in this glorious fellowship because ***He is love***. God does not lack anything. He has no need. He did not create humans because He was lonely or discontent or lacked something emotionally.

J. The love burning in God’s heart has at least 5 distinct yet deeply interrelated expressions.

1. ***God’s love for God***: Each Person in the Trinity intensely loves the Others with all Their heart.
2. ***God’s love for His people***: He loves His people with all of His heart, mind, and strength. He loves the redeemed with the same intensity that He loves within the fellowship of the Trinity.
3. ***Our love for God***: God’s very own love is imparted to His people by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5). The Spirit will establish the first command in first place in the Church before Jesus returns.
4. ***Our love for ourselves***: We love ourselves in God’s love and for God’s sake.
5. ***Our love for others***: We love others in the overflow of experiencing God’s love (1 Jn. 4:19).

K. One foundational premise of the kingdom is that God loves His people with the same intensity that God loves God. Jesus declared this truth twice on the night before He died (Jn. 15:9; 17:23).

⁹***“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” (Jn. 15:9)***

²³***“...that the world may know that You [Father]...loved them as You have loved Me.” (Jn. 17:23)***

L. Our hearts are awestruck as we grow in our understanding of some of the mystery of the love within the Trinity. How They love each Other! The Trinity has enjoyed a relationship of love for eternity!

M. God has been a Father and has loved Jesus with full, perfect love from all eternity. The Lord always loves in fullness because He is always 100% true to who He is. Never for one moment is He less than 100% loving or 100% wise or righteous. He cannot ever be less than who He is; if He did, He would deny Himself—even if He were just 1% deficient in just one attribute. He will never diminish or grow in love because His love is infinite in measure and eternal in duration.

⁶***“For I am the LORD; I do not change; therefore you are not consumed...” (Mal. 3:6)***

- N. We must see the first commandment in its eternal context of the fellowship in the Godhead instead of it being merely one aspect of kingdom ethics. He wants us to respond in wholehearted love because it is *who He is* and *who He created us to be*. We were created in His image for wholehearted love. It is the core reality of our relationship with God and the essence of salvation.
- O. "God's desires" are the most important thing in life. His infinite power and great wisdom are employed to carry out His desires—they are used to establish His plan to fill the earth with love.
- P. The Father always loves us in the way that He loves Jesus because He only loves in fullness. He does not withhold His love when a sincere believer stumbles or struggles with sin.
- Q. Our spiritual immaturity does not affect the way He feels about us. He never loves us less in this age than He will love us in the age to come, when we will live in the perfection of the resurrected state. *We experience more* of His love as we mature spiritually, but He does not love us more.
- R. Each Person in the Trinity enjoys an eternal, mutual relationship of love, humility, and unity. They have a deeply satisfying and fulfilling relationship in the fellowship of the Godhead. Imagine how enjoyable fellowship in the Trinity is and how we will enjoy participating in it!
1. **Love:** The Son loves the Father, and the Father loves the Son (Jn. 3:35; 5:20; 14:31).
 2. **Humility:** They deeply delight in using their authority to serve and honor each other freely (Jn. 5:23; 8:49-54; 12:26; 13:31-32; 14:12; 17:1, 4-5, 22, 24).
 3. **Intimate:** They know each other in a deep and personal way (Mt. 11:27; 1 Cor. 2:10).
 4. **Voluntary:** God relates in unity by free choice and by nature. Each Person eternally chooses to be Himself in relation to the others. Each one acts by nature in relationship.
 5. **Mutual:** Each Person is equally yoked in mutual love and wholehearted commitment. Each is fully involved, fully focused, and fully committed to each other.

II. FATHER'S LOVE FOR JESUS (JN. 15:9; 17:26)

- A. The Father's love for Jesus is the highest affection conceivable. The Father loves the Son (Jn. 3:35; 5:20; 10:17; 15:9; 17:23, 24, 26). Search out statements that depict the Father's love for Jesus.
- ⁹*"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love."* (Jn. 15:9)
- ³⁵*"The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand."* (Jn. 3:35)
- ²⁰*"For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does..."* (Jn. 5:20)
- ¹⁷*"...My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again."* (Jn. 10:17)
- ²³*"...perfect in one...that the world may know that You...have loved them as You have loved Me."*
- ²⁴*"...My glory which You have given Me; You loved Me before the foundation of the world..."*

²⁶I have declared to them Your name...that the love with which You loved Me may be in them...
(Jn. 17:23-26)

B. Father's love for Jesus includes putting all things into His hand (Jn. 3:35) and revealing all things to Him (Jn. 5:20). He loved His Son *before* the foundation of the world (Jn. 17:24). He loved the Son's life choices such as embracing the cross (Jn. 10:17). Jesus prayed "that the love with which the Father loved Him be supernaturally imparted into our hearts" (Jn. 17:26).

C. The Father spoke of His love for Jesus at His baptism (Mt. 3:17), just before His temptation in the wilderness, and again during the transfiguration (Mt. 17:5) before Jesus went to the cross.

¹⁷...suddenly a voice...saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Mt. 3:17)

⁵...suddenly a voice...saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Mt. 17:5)

D. Thank You, Father, for the intense, pleasurable, infinite way that You love Jesus; show me more!

E. The Father and Son have made eternal commitments to each Other. The Father committed to give Jesus the preeminence in everything. He works so that all creation *obeys* and *honors* Jesus and all the saints *love* Him. The Father's plan from eternity has been to exalt Jesus and give Him the supreme place over all creation (1 Cor. 15:24-26; cf. Ps. 110:1-3; Eph. 1:20-22; Phil. 2:9-11; Col 1:18).

¹⁸He is the head of the body...that in all things He may have the preeminence. (Col. 1:18)

¹⁰"And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them." (Jn. 17:10)

⁹God has...given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...¹¹and every tongue should confess that Jesus...is Lord... (Phil. 2:9-11)

F. As we read each episode in the Gospels, we should pause to *thank God* for the details of how the Trinity worked together and *ask for more insight*. We ask the Spirit to show us what each divine Person *did* and *felt* and how *we are to respond*. Reading the Scripture in this way can be like a treasure hunt into the beauty of God that fascinates and exhilarates our heart.

G. The details of Their relationship give us insight into Jesus' beauty, supremacy, and worth. It also gives us insight into the way that He loves us and how He will empower us to love Him and others.

III. JESUS LOVES THE FATHER

A. Search out the statements that depict Jesus' love, honor and obedience to the Father (15:10). Jesus exhorted them to view of His death as an expression of His love for the Father (14:11).

³⁰"...for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me...³¹But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do." (Jn. 14:30-31)

B. Jesus' obedience unto death was the most costly display of love for the Father in all of history.

"I love the Father" will be stamped over His story forever. Jesus knew that in God's timing "every living being" would know the truth: that He embraced the cross out of love for God (Phil. 2:11).

⁸...**He became obedient to the point of death...⁹Therefore God also has highly exalted Him...¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven and...earth...** (Phil. 2:8-10)

²⁴**Then comes the end [of the Millennium], when He [Jesus] delivers the kingdom to God the Father...²⁸When all things are made subject to Him [Jesus during the Millennium], then the Son Himself will be subject to Him [the Father]...that God may be all in all.** (1 Cor. 15:24-28)

IV. JESUS LOVES HIS DISCIPLES (JN. 15:9)

A. Jesus declared that He loves the redeemed in the same way or intensity that His Father loves Him (Jn. 15:9). He said that the Father also loves the redeemed with this same intensity (Jn. 17:23). Father, Son, and Spirit love the redeemed with all Their heart, mind, soul, and strength.

⁹**As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.** (Jn. 15:9)

B. The way the Father and the Son love us is the ultimate statement of our worth. This truth gives every believer the right to view themselves as "God's favorite."

C. The Father's love for Jesus is the source, measure, and assurance of Jesus' love for His family. Jesus wants us near Him in partnership in filling the earth with the Father's glory. In John 17:24, Jesus defined this glory through a relational paradigm. In His most difficult hour in facing death, He gave insight into some of His motivation—the "why" behind the "what" of redemption.

²³**...perfect in one...that the world may know that You...have loved them as You have loved Me.**
²⁴**Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; You loved Me before the foundation of the world...**
(Jn. 17:23-24)

D. Scripture repeatedly emphasizes Jesus' desire to be with us (Lk. 23:43; Jn. 12:26; 14:3; 17:24; 1 Thes. 4:17; Heb. 10:22). Jesus set forth a relational paradigm of the second coming (Jn. 14:3).

E. Revelation 3:21 is one of the most dramatic statements related to our function in the age to come. He wants us near Him, in close proximity to His heart and authority. He wants us to have *ownership* in His plan to fill the earth with glory and not to be "disassociated spectators."

²¹**To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne...** (Rev. 3:21)

F. Paul emphasized the Lord giving His people all things (3:22) pertaining to the earth (3:23).

²¹**All things are yours:** ²²**whether...the world or life or death, or things present or things to come—all are yours.** (1 Cor. 3:21-22)

G. God has a *message* that He wants to demonstrate—the exceeding richness of how kind He is. There is much that Jesus says about Himself by the way that He relates to His family.

6He...made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 2:6-7)

V. ABIDE IN LOVE: THE MOST IMPORANT COMMANDMENT (JN. 15:9)

A. We are to abide in or *stay focused on* living in His love in its various expressions. Thus, we are intentional about continuing in conversation with Him about receiving and expressing His love. Our greatest destiny is to participate in the burning love that exists in the fellowship of the Trinity.

9“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” (Jn. 15:9)

B. Abiding in God's love is the main exhortation in the Bible. It includes studying and praying for more knowledge of it (Phil. 1:9; Eph. 1:17-18). John 15:9 and 17:23 beckon us to become lifelong students of how the Father loves the Son and thus gain insight into how the Father loves us.

C. One way that we abide or live in the realm of His love is by reflecting often on His words and promises. Abiding in His love speaks of our on-going dialogue with God with active trust in His Word (promises, warnings, doctrines, etc.) and a spirit of obedience flowing from mutual affection.

D. God's primary method in changing His people is to reveal how much He loves and cherishes them. This is to be the primary preoccupation of our life before, during, and after revival. We are to *behold* or understand the quality of the Father's love for us (1 Jn. 3:1).

1Behold what manner [quality] of love the Father has bestowed on us...(1 Jn. 3:1)

1. By beholding or seeing the quality of this love, we are more empowered to resist temptation, endure persecution, and press into God in the midst of various trials without drawing back.

2. The Spirit will teach us about God's love. I encourage you to pray, “*Holy Spirit, let me see and feel what You see and feel about the Father's love for Jesus and for His family.*”

E. I see 5 parts of the “intimacy process” with God—they overlap and flow together, yet it begins with *knowing* the truth mentally (Jn. 8:32). These 5 parts are *knowledge*, *conversation*, *illumination*, *inspiration*, and then *transformation* which is satisfying, pleasurable, and unifying.

F. Mary chose the good part (Lk. 10:42). No one can choose this for us. We must be intentional about making a “determined” choice to love God as our *primary life goal*.

42Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her. (Lk. 10:42)

- G. The grace or anointing of the Spirit to love Jesus is our greatest reward. The greatest reward of love is found in possessing a greater ability to receive and return love. Anybody can quit, except a person in love. When we are tempted to quit, our love for Him keeps us from doing so.
- H. Abiding starts with words. Simple phrases spoken to God can shift our emotions. Over time, what He thinks, feels, says, and does gradually fills our hearts. One of my favorite prayers is to ask the Spirit to let me *see what He sees, feel what He feels, and say what He says* about my life, my family, and others—and about Jesus, the Church, the harvest, the nations, the end times, etc.
- I. It is a common error to try to live the Christian life without Christ—*without conversation with Him*. We cease from striving to love God and people by continually returning to conversation with Jesus which empowers us to love instead of striving in our human strength to love by our own efforts.
- J. The altogether worthy One who is *so high* (transcendent) went *so low* (immanent) in love to bring us *so near* (as kings with authority and priests near to Him) because we are *so dear* to Him (His love). The hymns of Revelation bring together these truths of His greatness expressed in His great love and desire for us to be with Him as kings (authority) and priests (near His heart).
- ⁹*You are worthy...for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood...*
¹⁰*And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.*” (Rev. 5:9-10)
- K. The revelation of Jesus’ *worth to us* is magnified in seeing *our worth to Him* in His grace.
- L. The storyline in His heart includes our value to Him. Jesus did not die for angels. Why would He go to this extreme for us? The answer is found in who He is and the quality of love He possesses.