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JESUS

MINISTRY

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RECEIVING AND ADVANCING IN JESUS-MINISTRY IS ALL ABOUT THE HEART.

THIS IS WHERE IT BEGINS AND ENDS. WHEN WE OBSERVE JESUS AS HE TRAINS HIS TWELVE DISCIPLES, IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT JESUS DOES VERY LITTLE “HOW TO” INSTRUCTION. JESUS’ TRAINING CENTERED ON DEVELOPING THEIR HEARTS, AND CHARACTER, TO CARRY OUT HIS MINISTRY. HOW OFTEN DID HE ADDRESS THEIR HEARTS OF UNBELIEF, PRIDE, PREEMINENCE, INSENSITIVITY, EXCLUSIVITY, PREJUDICE, WORLDLINESS, AND MORE? WHEN HE WAS THROUGH TRAINING THEM CONCERNING THEIR HEARTS, THEY WERE MEN OF COMPASSION AND POWER!

Jesus’ ministry did not end with His ascension—it carried on in an even greater measure as His presence, compassion, and power was unleashed in His disciples’ lives, and it spread throughout the early church. The world was rocked by the power of Jesus in the early church during the first century. There is a certain heart condition that is necessary to receive revelation from God. Many can hear truth but not receive revelation. Jesus said many have ears but cannot hear, many have eyes but cannot see. So what is the foundation for Jesus-ministry? The condition of our hearts!

In the first two sessions, we will look briefly at the heart condition necessary for Jesus-ministry. This is a large

subject, so the focus is narrowed to humility. This is key because humility results in hunger and desperation and identifies and destroys religious forms. It cultivates the servant-heart of Jesus!

JESUS-MINISTRY DEFINED

You will see often in this text the phrase “Jesus-ministry.” What do we mean when we use this phrase? Simply, when we read the gospels and observe the works of Christ, this is “Jesus-ministry.” But Jesus-ministry encapsulates more than Jesus’ ministry while he walked

the earth, for we see in the book of Acts His work was continued by the early Church. We see it very succinctly depicted and spoken of by Jesus several times in the gospels. The following verse delineates for us Christ's own understanding of Jesus-ministry:

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, FOR HE HAS APPOINTED ME TO PREACH GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM THAT CAPTIVES WILL BE RELEASED, THAT THE BLIND WILL SEE, THAT THE DOWNTRODDEN WILL BE FREED FROM THEIR OPPRESSORS AND THAT THE TIME OF THE LORD'S FAVOR HAS COME. [_LUKE 4:18-19 \(NLT\)](#)

In Jesus' intercessory prayer to His Heavenly Father for His apostles, and for all those who would become His followers in generations to come, He stated this:

AS YOU SENT ME INTO THE WORLD, I HAVE SENT THEM INTO THE WORLD. [_JOHN 17:18 \(NIV\)](#)

Therefore, the mission of the Church (all who are true followers of Jesus Christ) is to continue Jesus' assignment here on earth as described in Luke 4:18-19 and other verses so concisely.

THE HEART CONDITION FOR REVELATION CONCERNING JESUS-MINISTRY

THEN JESUS BEGAN TO TELL THEM THAT HE, THE SON OF MAN, WOULD SUFFER MANY TERRIBLE THINGS AND BE REJECTED BY THE LEADERS, THE LEADING PRIESTS, AND THE TEACHERS OF RELIGIOUS LAW. HE WOULD BE KILLED, AND THREE DAYS LATER HE WOULD RISE AGAIN. AS HE TALKED ABOUT THIS OPENLY WITH HIS DISCIPLES, PETER TOOK HIM ASIDE AND TOLD HIM HE SHOULDN'T SAY THINGS LIKE THAT.

JESUS TURNED AND LOOKED AT HIS DISCIPLES AND THEN SAID TO PETER VERY STERNLY, "GET AWAY FROM ME, SATAN! YOU ARE SEEING THINGS MERELY FROM A HUMAN POINT OF VIEW, NOT FROM GOD'S." THEN HE CALLED HIS DISCIPLES AND THE CROWDS TO COME OVER AND LISTEN. "IF ANY OF YOU WANTS TO BE MY FOLLOWER," HE TOLD THEM, "YOU MUST PUT ASIDE YOUR SELFISH AMBITION, SHOULDER YOUR CROSS, AND FOLLOW ME. IF YOU TRY TO KEEP YOUR LIFE FOR YOURSELF, YOU WILL LOSE IT. BUT IF YOU GIVE UP YOUR LIFE FOR MY SAKE AND FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOOD NEWS, YOU WILL FIND TRUE LIFE. AND HOW DO YOU BENEFIT IF YOU GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD BUT LOSE YOUR OWN SOUL IN THE PROCESS? IS ANYTHING WORTH MORE THAN YOUR SOUL?"

[_MARK 8:31-37 \(NLT\)](#)

THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

This is an amazing account that is recorded in all three synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), and each account provides a slightly different dimension of insight.

One of the major objectives of Jesus' earthly ministry was to establish that He was the Messiah. Even with the amazing miracles that He performed, people did not readily recognize Him as the Messiah. He asked His twelve disciples who the general population said that He was. He then asked them who they thought He was. The general population gave diverse answers—all of them wrong. When Jesus asked His disciples who they thought He was, Peter responded by saying that He was the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. That was a profound revelation. Many witnessed Jesus' teaching, compassion, and miracle power, but virtually no one had the revelation that He was the long-promised Messiah.

Matthew's Gospel then states that Peter was blessed for he had not received that revelation from human beings or by human capacity—it came from God. But the shift in the story is drastic and alarming.

Jesus then began to tell them what would happen to the Messiah whom they just identified. He would suffer severe persecution and then be executed in the most painful and humiliating process of that time—crucifixion. Peter had a strong reaction to Jesus' teaching of His immediate future. He took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him.

Both Matthew's and Mark's account record Jesus' response to Peter. It is an unexpected response that is as shocking as it is convicting. Jesus turned to Peter and sternly said, "Get behind me Satan!" He went on to relay that Peter did not have the mind and concerns of God, but instead the mind and concerns of man.

Just moments earlier Jesus had told Peter that his insight and revelation had come directly from God. Then, Peter was rebuked for having the perspective of Satan! Imagine yourself in Peter's position! How devastating would that be?

After this, Jesus gathered the crowd around Him and presented the truth that is the key to unlocking the mystery of receiving revelation from God concerning ourselves, Jesus, and Jesus-ministry. But before we present and explain this key, we need to understand its significance in the wider context of the gospel accounts.

THE EXPANDED CONTEXT

Luke described his own Gospel as "an orderly account." This is significant, as Luke gives us a detailed account of the time line of the ministry of Jesus and the disciples. Read and meditate on Luke 9 for the purpose of understanding Jesus' ministry in context.

Prior to chapter nine, Jesus demonstrates who He is through His life, teachings, and miracles. At the beginning of chapter nine, Jesus sends out His twelve disciples to carry out His ministry in surrounding towns and villages. He imparted to them His power and authority to deliver people from demonic activity, to heal the sick, and to preach the good news of God's kingdom.

It is recorded that they returned from a successful trip of ministering in God's power. He tested their humility and faith in the miraculous feeding of the 5,000. This was followed by Peter's confession that Jesus was the Messiah and his satanically energized attempt to correct Jesus about His death and resurrection. The next account Luke recorded is the supernatural transfigura-

tion of Jesus (with the appearance of Elijah and Moses). The account that follows the transfiguration is a story about the inability of the disciples to heal a boy of demonic seizures. Then the disciples argued over whom among them would be the greatest in the kingdom. In the disciples' religious pride they began rebuking and shutting down anyone who was ministering in Jesus' name, but were not a part of the Twelve. This was followed by James and John offering to call down fire from heaven to consume those who opposed Jesus. Jesus, of course, rebuked them strongly.

This chapter presents to us a full picture of Jesus-ministry and the disciples' efforts to carry it out. The chapter is manic in terms of the disciples moving in God's power and revelation one moment and the next moment being energized by their own sinful flesh and/or demonic activity. So what is the key to unlock our capacity to receive and move in Jesus-ministry?

THE KEY TO UNLOCKING THE HEART CONDITION TO RECEIVE AND MOVE IN JESUS-MINISTRY

All three synoptic Gospels record for us the secrets of Jesus' heart. If we return to the beginning of this chapter, Peter had just received divine revelation and the very next moment he was used by Satan, aided by his own fallen nature. In the midst of the immediate context concerning revelation and in the middle of the expanded context of Jesus-ministry, Jesus gave the following instruction:

THEN HE SAID TO THE CROWD, "IF ANY OF YOU WANTS TO BE MY FOLLOWER, YOU MUST PUT ASIDE YOUR SELFISH AMBITION, SHOULDER YOUR CROSS DAILY, AND FOLLOW ME. IF YOU TRY TO KEEP YOUR LIFE FOR YOURSELF, YOU WILL LOSE IT. BUT IF YOU GIVE UP YOUR LIFE FOR ME, YOU WILL FIND TRUE LIFE. AND HOW DO YOU BENEFIT IF YOU GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD BUT LOSE OR FORFEIT YOUR OWN SOUL IN THE PROCESS? IF A PERSON IS ASHAMED OF ME AND MY

MESSAGE, I, THE SON OF MAN, WILL BE ASHAMED OF THAT PERSON WHEN I RETURN IN MY GLORY AND IN THE GLORY OF THE FATHER AND THE HOLY ANGELS."

[_ LUKE 9:23-26 \(NLT\)](#)

Jesus presented several components to the key that gives us the heart condition necessary to receive and move in Jesus-ministry:

#1 PUT ASIDE SELFISH AMBITION.

How often do we see the disciples seeking preeminence? Who among them is going to be the greatest in the kingdom? Can two of them sit at the right and left hand of Jesus in His kingdom? The other ten get angry with the two because they thought of it first. On and on the examples go.

To follow Jesus you cannot be selfish or self absorbed. Are you willing to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness? Are you willing to lay down your life for the benefit and well-being of others?

The rich young ruler in Luke 18 wanted to follow Jesus—but only if he could keep his wealth. He was not hungry enough for Jesus to leave behind his wealth and position. He wanted to follow Jesus, but He was not desperate. You cannot receive and be a part of Jesus-ministry halfheartedly. You cannot be lukewarm in your allegiances.

Selfish ambition is also revealed in pride. Our pride keeps us from being honest about who we really are and what we are really like. Pride will not allow us to see ourselves as God sees us. Pride will not allow us to admit our sin. If we are going to receive Jesus-ministry, we must humbly submit ourselves and realize we are spiritually bankrupt. We must own and mourn over any sin that surfaces in our lives. This is why we see Jesus begin the beatitudes message with:

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN, FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED.

[_ MATTHEW 5:3-4 \(NASB\)](#)

#2 DAILY TAKE UP YOUR CROSS IN FOLLOWING JESUS.

To receive and participate in Jesus-ministry you must be willing to take up your cross daily. What does this mean? Philippians 2 gives us insight to Jesus' heart condition when he took up His cross.

YOUR ATTITUDE SHOULD BE THE SAME THAT CHRIST JESUS HAD. THOUGH HE WAS GOD, HE DID NOT DEMAND AND CLING TO HIS RIGHTS AS GOD. HE MADE HIMSELF NOTHING; HE TOOK THE HUMBLE POSITION OF A SLAVE AND APPEARED IN HUMAN FORM. AND IN HUMAN FORM HE OBEDIENTLY HUMBLING HIMSELF EVEN FURTHER BY DYING A CRIMINAL'S DEATH ON A CROSS.

[_ PHILIPPIANS 2:5-8 \(NLT\)](#)

JESUS GAVE UP HIS RIGHTS:

Taking up your cross means giving up all your perceived and legitimate rights. Rights mean nothing in your pursuit of Christ. Are you that desperate? What rights are you holding on to? Are you so desperate for Christ that you would give up any right for Him?

JESUS BECAME A SERVANT:

Are you willing to see yourself as a servant to Jesus and others? This is part of taking up your cross. A servant has a heart of humble desperation. Jesus described His own servant's heart in Luke 17:7-10.

WHEN A SERVANT COMES IN FROM PLOWING OR TAKING CARE OF SHEEP, HE DOESN'T JUST SIT DOWN AND EAT. HE MUST FIRST PREPARE HIS MASTER'S MEAL AND SERVE HIM HIS SUPPER BEFORE EATING HIS OWN. AND THE SERVANT IS NOT EVEN THANKED, BECAUSE HE IS MERELY DOING WHAT HE IS SUPPOSED TO DO. IN THE SAME WAY, WHEN YOU OBEY ME YOU SHOULD SAY, "WE ARE NOT WORTHY OF PRAISE. WE ARE SERVANTS WHO HAVE SIMPLY DONE OUR DUTY." [_ LUKE 17:7-10 \(NLT\)](#)

JESUS DEMONSTRATED DEEP HUMILITY:

Note in Philippians 2:8 that Jesus' humility penetrated so deeply that He died a criminal's death even though He was innocent and infinitely righteous. He took the penalty of others' sins and failures upon Himself without saying a word. Not only was He a servant who took care of others, He took the responsibility and punishment for the sin and wrong that others committed. If you operate at this level of humility, you will take ownership of your sins.

#3 LAY DOWN YOUR LIFE FOR JESUS.

What about yourself, your life, your possessions, or position? Will you not give these up for Jesus? Which entitlements do you think are too valuable to give up for Jesus and your life of following Him? Are you willing to say "yes," to whatever Jesus asks of you? In what area of your life are you saying "no," to Jesus? Do you live in immediate, unqualified obedience?

#4 GIVE UP WORLDLINESS AND THE PURSUITS OF THE WORLD.

The world system is run by Satan and its economy includes the values of Satan's kingdom. 1 John 2:16 describes the irreducible characteristics of this worldliness:

FOR THE WORLD OFFERS ONLY THE LUST FOR PHYSICAL PLEASURE, THE LUST FOR EVERYTHING WE SEE, AND PRIDE IN OUR POSSESSIONS. THESE ARE NOT FROM THE FATHER. THEY ARE FROM THIS EVIL WORLD. [_1 JOHN 2:16 \(NLT\)](#)

Worldliness is characterized by lust for physical pleasures, lust to consume and possess what we see and desire, and pride in what we possess and accomplish.

Satan, the overseer of the world system, energizes our sinful nature to be consumed with the things of this world. Galatians 5:19-21 describes how the sinful nature is unleashed, which moves in partnership with the world system. We must completely reject the lie of pleasure and lasting satisfaction through worldly means!

WHEN YOU FOLLOW THE DESIRES OF YOUR SINFUL NATURE, YOUR LIVES WILL PRODUCE THESE EVIL RESULTS: SEXUAL IMMORALITY, IMPURE THOUGHTS, EAGERNESS FOR LUSTFUL PLEASURE, IDOLATRY, PARTICIPATION IN DEMONIC ACTIVITIES, HOSTILITY, QUARRELING, JEALOUSY, OUTBURSTS OF ANGER, SELFISH AMBITION, DIVISIONS, THE FEELING THAT EVERYONE IS WRONG EXCEPT THOSE IN YOUR OWN LITTLE GROUP, ENVY, DRUNKENNESS, WILD PARTIES, AND OTHER KINDS OF SIN . . .

[_GALATIANS 5:19-21 \(NLT\)](#)

#5 LIVE WITH A BOLD COMMITMENT TO JESUS.

Living in obedience and faithfulness to Jesus is vital if we want to have hearts sold out for Jesus-ministry. It is once again a demonstration of a humble desperation or hunger for Jesus and His life.

SUMMARY

When you meditate on Luke 9, you can see how the human heart can miss revelation and oppose the heart and power of Jesus-ministry. You now have insight to the heart condition necessary to receive and move powerfully in Jesus-ministry. What we just read can be summarized by the words humility, desperation, and hunger. The necessary heart condition is to be humble and desperately hungry for Jesus.

Jesus-ministry is not about counseling or self-help. It is not even a means to have more joy. If we approach Jesus-ministry as a formula to pray for people then we have already missed the point. If we want to learn some techniques to assist us in our ministry, like an additive to what is already in place, we will crash and burn. If Jesus-ministry just becomes another product to add to our repertoire, we again fail. The holiness of God combined with the transforming power of His Spirit will expose the heart and confront every attitude that opposes His kingdom. Jesus-ministry is an embracing of this power and freedom. The core aspects are simply repentance and obedience. We must not be looking

to blame the enemy for everything or chase demons, or seek outlandish experiences—these do not lead to lasting change. On the contrary, we must come to understand that the root problem is our sin, and the enemy can only wield influence because of it. This humble understanding is the gateway to Jesus-ministry. It is crucial that we stop right here and preform an honest, Spirit-led examination of our hearts.

So what kind of heart is ready for Jesus-ministry? What are we aiming for as we confront and destroy the religious forms that are blocking power? The answer is found in the Gospels, in the hearts of the people who received ministry from Jesus Himself. They all displayed one common characteristic: *they were sick and realized they had great need.* Jesus said:

IT IS NOT THE HEALTHY WHO NEED A DOCTOR, BUT THE SICK. BUT GO AND LEARN WHAT THIS MEANS: 'I DESIRE MERCY, NOT SACRIFICE.' FOR I HAVE NOT COME TO CALL THE RIGHTEOUS, BUT SINNERS. [_MATTHEW 9:12-13 \(NIV\)](#)

In other words, only the desperate can receive Jesus-ministry — we have to see our need. Many will say they are hungry for Jesus-ministry, but religious forms will remain firmly in place, and they will never move fully into a place of hunger and humility that Jesus taught in the New Testament. Often, it is the furnace of affliction and the pressure of circumstance that bring a person to the point of seeking Jesus-ministry, and the cry arises, “Heal me, Jesus!” But a deeper cry is necessary, a painful cry of the soul: “Jesus, come restore me fully! Heal not only my body, but my heart as well. I desire to repent!” This is the central prayer of Jesus-ministry. But the fear, pride, and self-reliance of our hearts resist this brokenness. We need breakthrough revelation and a fresh understanding of the desperation and faith that were present in New Testament miracles in order to see them present in our own hearts and lives.

PERSONAL JESUS-MINISTRY HEART CHECK

A. HUMILITY.

- *I desire to tirelessly serve the Lord and others.*
- *I want to ruthlessly identify and give up entitlements, especially with my time, schedules, relationships, and resources.*
- *I am willing to be taken out of my comfort zone.*
- *I do not want to do anything for my own glory.*
- *I hunger to serve behind the scenes, and I am pleased and satisfied to know that only Jesus knows what I do.*
- *I want to live on earth for that which is bigger than myself.*
- *I want to see God's big picture for His kingdom, others' lives, and myself. I want to live for the Kingdom.*
- *I want to die to personal expectations, understand Jesus' expectations, and submit myself fully to Him.*
- *I desire to despise materialism and live for kingdom purposes.*
- *I want to live with “eagle eyes” so that I can see how to serve and benefit others.*
- *I am desperate to live a life that will bless others at every opportunity.*

B. DESPERATION AND HUNGER.

- *I abhor the status quo.*
- *I hunger to press into deeper intimacy with Jesus.*
- *I strongly desire to press into fresh and greater revelation of Jesus and His ways.*
- *I hunger to press into greater joy of holiness and righteousness.*
- *I am desperate to press into greater knowledge, understanding, and application of Scriptural truth.*