

## EQUIPPING ~ HOLY SPIRIT-HEARING CONTINUED

JUNE 12, 2024

So, I read this article where they asked a group of 10 year old kids this question: *how do you choose who you are going to marry?*

Alan, age 9, replied: *You gotta find somebody who likes the same stuff. Like if you like sports, she should like it, that you like sports. And she should keep the chips and dip coming. That's really important.*

Christian age 10 said: *No person really decides before they grow up who they're going to marry. God decides it all way before and you get to find out later who you're stuck with.*

How can a stranger tell if two people are married? Derrick age 10 responded: *You might have to guess based on whether they seem to be yelling at the same kids.*

Laurie age 10 was asked the question: *What do you think your mom and dad have in common?* Her response was: *Both don't want any more kids.*

Lynn at age eight was asked: *What do most people do on a date?* She said *Dates are for having fun. People should use them to get to know each other. Even boys have something to say if you listen long enough.*

One more: *How would you make a marriage work?* Ricky, 10 said: *Tell your wife that she looks pretty. Even if she looks like a dump truck.*

I think we need to pray for these children.

In our Equipping time last month we talked about hearing the Voice of the Holy Spirit, and I was so thrilled that a number of you emailed some questions to me as you dug down on the notes. I answered each question individually, but I felt it would be helpful to address them as a group tonight as well.

First off, let me say how happy I was to hear questions, because it means we are rooting down on the teachings, and I love that.

I have learned in my life that there are various levels of 'teachers' in the body of Christ teaching spiritual truths, and each level presents an opportunity for us to grow from what they are 'teaching'

One of the first levels of teaching is someone may be asked to lead a Bible study or something like that, and they get with the Holy Spirit and they read through Scripture, they get an idea and they write down their notes, and they share them.

And I promise you, it will be good, because they are sharing with you what the Spirit showed them, and there will be a Holy Spirit anointing on it.

The second level teacher is one who has the ‘spiritual gift’ of teaching, and they will do the same thing the first-level teacher will do. They will get with the Holy Spirit, and prepare a lesson and they release it.

Then there is a ‘third-level’ teacher, and this is the one who also has the ‘gift of teaching’ which comes with a significant level of Holy Spirit anointing. The third-level teacher also is teaching something they are experiencing.

They are not teaching out of knowledge, they are speaking out of experience. They are giving away something they have.

They are releasing something they have learned and applied to their life. If they do not carry what they are sharing, they will say something to the effect of ‘I don’t have this fully yet, but’.

Listening to third-level teachers you find your inner man getting excited about what you’re hearing, and you have this almost divine realization, that you can have the same thing, do the same thing, live in the same freedom, the speaker is talking about.

And here’s the thing: Each level of teacher is doing the same thing. What these teachers are doing is sharing with you what the Holy Spirit has revealed to them.

They are marking ‘an X’ marks the spot.’ They are saying, this is what the Holy Spirit revealed to me, and I am showing you where you can go, on your own, with the Holy Spirit, and dig for treasure for yourself, to get your own personal revelation.

Because I am pretty sure that what you hear from me, you will probably forget, but you will never forget what the Holy Spirit personally showed you.

So, you can see why I am so excited to hear questions, to hear that people are digging on their own, with the Holy Spirit for your own personal treasure.

So, let’s look at the three questions:

The first question: This statement was made in our Equipping Session: *The Lord loves us, does not condemn us, loves us in our failures and accepts us as we are.*

*If we have problems with experiencing God’s love, we will have problems receiving correction.*

Why?

Can you shed some light on that?

IF, you are having problems experiencing God’s love leads to the question: Why? Why are you having problems experiencing the love of God?

The probable answer to why people struggle with the reality that God loves them unconditionally, that God loves them 100%, all the time, whether they are in a moment when they feel they are doing great, or when they feel like an abject failure, God loves them.

Most Christians who only know the love of God as a point of theology-*Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so*-but have not put a demand on their theology to take them to an experience, will struggle believing, receiving and experiencing the *furiously, radical, over-the-top* love of God.

The moment you fail, the moment you sin, the moment you make a bad choice, in that moment you are convinced that God is *angry with you, disappointed with you and frustrated with you*. HE IS NOT. HE DOES NOT GET DISAPPOINTED OR FRUSTRATED.

Now, if you have a problem 'experiencing' God's love, it means you have not yet apprehended his love, or been apprehended by his love; it means you are not experiencing the transformative power of the crazy, furious love of Jesus in your life.

And because of that you actually see all *correction, intervention, and pruning* in your life as *discipline or punishment*.

IT IS NOT! Everything God does he does:

FROM LOVE;

OUT OF LOVE

SATURATED IN LOVE

ALL THE DEALINGS OF GOD IN OUR LIFE HAVE TO DO WITH LOVE!

So, if you are struggling with experiencing the love of the Lord, it is because you are living a 'performance-based' relationship with him, attempting to earn his love, and keep his love by performing.

You are attempting to earn something that he simply wants to lavish over, in, on and through you. And you are attempting to not lose something, his love, which you never could.

And that needs to change, for so many reasons, especially if you are going to be able to receive the *correction or pruning of the Lord*, because as we read in John 15, *the Lord prunes those he loves!*

This chapter is famous for two primary reasons. One is this is the chapter where Jesus says to His disciples, *I no longer call you servants, I call you friends*, and the second is he tells us that his pruning is a reward.

John 15:1-*I am the true vine. My father's the vine dresser. 2-Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away; and every branch that bears fruit he prunes, so that it may bear more fruit.* God rewards all growth with pruning.

Pruning in the kingdom is not punishment. People look at the discipline of God and they often assume that the discipline or the pruning of the Lord has to do with punishment.

Correction, pruning, is not punishment, it is all about producing more and more fruit in and through our life.

The Lord is a God of pleasure. He thought up pleasure. However, pleasure outside of his purposes, is actually destructive. That's why I say: *God's judgment is always aimed at whatever interferes with love.*

The Holy Spirit always targets the stuff that will destroy us, hurt us or harm us. He comes against anything that opposes his kingdom and the culture of heaven.

I love watching our kids raising their kids, because I see so often how they will put a stop to them doing something that could be detrimental to them.

And as the child gets angry, one of the parents will invariably say: *Camden, Cooper, Colby*, whichever one it might be, *I am responsible to keep you safe and make sure you do not harm yourself, so I am taking this away, or I am stopping this*-So, they remove the scissors from their hand.

And Colby, Cooper or Camden, will get so angry because they think mom or dad just ruined their fun-but in reality, the parents are actually wanting to make sure the child grows up with two eyes that work.

It is not punishment, it is actually a choice to keep them safe. All of God's involvement in our life is about LOVE.

And he wants us to not just have a theology of love-*Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.*

He wants us to live in the experience of how radically he loves us.

Here's the thing, it is great to have a foundation of solid theology. Jesus loves me. Yes. It's great. But if you do not put a demand upon your theology to take you into an experience, you never know if your 'theology' works.

A person with an experience in the truth of say, 'Jesus loves me', knows by encounters and experiences, that, that theology is true. A person with an experience is NEVER at the mercy of a person with ONLY theology.

In Paul's second powerful prophetic prayer in Ephesians 3 he prayed that we would *apprehend* the love of God.

That word 'apprehend' means to-*grasp, grab-hold of, for an experience*. It means, *to encounter*. It's where Encounter 319 derives its name.

And then Paul prays that we would *experience the love of God, beyond knowledge*. Paul's prayer is that, when it comes to the love of God, move from 'theology' to 'experience'.

The Holy Spirit wants us to apprehend the love of God and be apprehended by the radical love of God.

The love of God is available if you will apprehend it. Some people sit there and want God to break through all the barriers when God is saying: *Listen, the walls are paper thin, step into my world and I will rock you.*

He's not playing hard-to-get. It's just that He's done so much to make love available. Come and grab hold of that which will grab hold of you, and never let go.

*If you are having difficulty experiencing the love of God, you will have trouble receiving his correction.*

If we do not see ourselves as the Beloved of God; and if we do not see ourselves as the central object of His extreme affection then we will not relax and rest in His love, because we are too busy attempting to earn and keep his love.

Or even worse: we start believing that our lack of performance means that we are not worthy of such love, without performing for it.

Let me encourage you, reach out and apprehend the love of God, and let his love apprehend you.

When our family was growing up we attended so many MLB baseball games, and I had this crazy OBSESSION with wanting to get a foul ball. I was out-of-control. I had to *apprehend* a baseball. I had to experience it.

So, one day I brought our family to a game in SF early, for bating practice. I forced our sons Matt, who was in high school at this point, and our younger son Kagen, to go to the fence outside the outfield, with their gloves and catch a ball.

Now Matt, was an All-League third baseman. You could not hit a ball by him. He caught everything. So, there they are in the outfield. Karissa and I are in the stands and this guy hits one high and deep, and over the fence. It was heading right towards Matt.

I am like, oh yeah! I'm getting a ball. No way he misses this. And here it comes, right to him, he very nonchalantly sticks out his glove and reaches for the ball; the ball hits his glove, bounces out and rolls away, and another kid grabs it. I'm like—*what the heck just happened? Are you serious?*

Well, needless to say, no other ball came close, and the boys came back. I was like-Matt, what the heck. And he's like: *Dad, you have issues. Seriously. I know you wanted that ball, and I really wanted to get it for you, but I just didn't. I'm sorry.*

Here's what I discovered. Getting that ball was NOT his PASSION. He was not desperate to APPREHEND IT. It did not mean anything to HIM. When it meant something to him, he apprehended every ball. When it held no value for him—he didn't get it.

THAT'S THE WAY IT IS WITH THE LOVE OF GOD. There is so much more love available. How desperate are you for more encounters with this radical, life-changing love? It's available if we will APPREHEND it for an experience.

The second question: *How do we hear/discern the Lord's voice related to correction? Correction implies that we are not doing something right, thus God loves us in our failures, but wants to correct us. How can we know that what we are receiving his correction?*

Great question, but I do want to correct something here: I want to state very clearly: Correction of the Lord does NOT mean we are doing something wrong, or not doing something right.

In fact, *all the correction and intervention of God in our life is aimed at everything that opposes or interferes with love, the Kingdom, or negatively influencing our truest identity.*

Here's the process: When the Holy Spirit sees something in my life that fits that criteria of opposing love, opposing my values, influencing my identity in a negative way, he will scan my life, my emotions, my mental and spiritual condition.

If he sees I am ready to make an exchange, he comes and touches that thing in my life. He never touches anything to make me feel bad or guilty.

Then he overwhelms me with love, and he says something to the effect of: *Gary, I am touching something in your life that will not really travel well where I am taking you. So I would like you to surrender that to me, because I have something I want to give to you in exchange.*

And then he floods me with the love of Jesus and I quickly make this DIVINE exchange.

He never brings condemnation, guilt or shame, and he always overwhelms us with the love of Jesus and we gladly make the exchange.

Let me give you an example. Many years ago a prophet called me out in a meeting and gave me a profound word. Part of that word was that I would be a man who always responds to all opposition, and crisis with peace, rest and stillness.

I actually heard my soul laughing inside of me, because I never responded to anything with peace, rest and stillness. Not even close. But while my soul was laughing, my spirit was leaping, because he knew that is who I truly was at the core.

So, I declared to myself-yes, this is who I want to be. And as you know, all prophecy is a prayer and faith agenda, and puts you on a journey of-the word spoken, the process, and the development of that word. So I knew I was entering into a process of exchanges, and pruning.

I knew I was in for a time of pruning, because the fruit of peace, rest and stillness was replacing my soulish fruit of anger and violence.

And here is how the Holy Spirit began to transform me, and prune greater fruit in me, while cutting away the branches that are not bearing fruit.

When Karissa and I were dating, she came over to the house one hot summer afternoon to make us dinner. This was the first meal she would be preparing for us.

For some reason I decided that while she was making dinner, I would do her a favor and repair a little rattle in her car under the dashboard that had been disturbing her. 😊

Just to clarify, I have no skills to repair anything, least of all something in a vehicle. I allowed my passion for Karissa, and my desire to do something nice for her, overrule wisdom.

Armed with a long, heavy screwdriver and a flashlight, I headed out into the 100-degree day to tighten the screw. Utilizing the flashlight I had no problem in locating the loose screw. I affixed the flashlight to the car and began to tighten the screw. The heat inside the car was stifling, and I was sweating profusely, but my determination to help Karissa kept me focused.

Working steadily, I felt the screwdriver beginning to secure the screw, but way too slowly for the discomfort I was enduring. Suddenly, the sweat from my hands caused the heavy screwdriver to slip out of my hand and fall to the floor of the car.

Now I should mention that in a Nissan Sentra, getting my hands to reach up into the cramped area of the dashboard with a screwdriver was very costly to the skin. My goal was to only force them up under the dashboard one time.

However, over the course of the next fifteen to twenty minutes, that scene of the screwdriver getting sweat-soaked and falling to the floor of the car was on a repeat cycle. Each time the screwdriver hit the floor, my infamous temper began to escalate, until rage finally won the battle.

The final straw was when the screwdriver slipped off the screw and hit me directly in the face on its familiar path toward the floor.

As it did, I lost total control and snapped my head up, smashing it into the steering wheel. Grabbing the screwdriver, I flew out of the car in a rage. At that exact moment, Karissa was coming out of the door cheerily calling out, "Dinner is ready!"

As she spoke those words, I launched the screwdriver, throwing it up the long walkway towards my neighbor's house. He had a large plate glass window and I watched the screwdriver airborne and spiraling directly towards it.

Both Karissa and I were glued to the screwdriver as it neared the window. Fortunately for me, it lost its momentum before slamming into the window, so that instead of shattering it, it simply shook violently.

By this time, I had lost steam, as is usually the case when I released my temper in a fit of anger. I looked over at Karissa, who, by now was wide-eyed, turned on her heels and quickly headed back into the house.

As I started towards the front door, I could already feel the guilt and shame beginning to wash over me.

While Karissa forgave me, I found it impossible to forgive myself, and I allowed that incident to push me into a dark place, and I would stay there a long time, hiding from God and people, because the enemy convinced me God was angry with me.

At this point in my life I had not yet apprehended the love of God, and been apprehended by the love of God. I was still living a performance-based life with God, and everytime I failed I thought he was disgusted with me.

It wasn't until I got revelation of how the Holy Spirit responds to me when I fail, that things changed for me. The Lord is not angry at me; he is not disgusted with me; he is not disillusioned with me, like the enemy was convincing me.

No, he draws near when I fail; he helps me forgive myself; and he gently and tenderly says: *Ahh, that's okay Gary, This is not who you are Gary. This was just a poor choice. Get up, dust yourself off, remain in me, and use this opportunity to get bigger and stronger, so you will pass the next test.*

It is what our friend Graham used to say: you cannot fail a test of God, you just get to keep taking them over and over until you start to pass them.

So, the first way you know it is God correcting you and not the enemy, is love, and the fact there is no guilt, no shame, and no condemnation.

The second way you can know that it is the Lord correcting you is to learn to recognize the Voice of the Holy Spirit.

The voice of the Lord is always loving, always gentle, and even in times of pruning or correction, his voice is always tender and loving. It is never accusatory or condemning.

The dictionary defines *gentleness* as: *The quality of being kind, tender.* I love that definition. One of the fruits of the spirit is 'gentleness', tenderness.



When the Holy Spirit speaks to you, to encourage you, especially when he comes to prune, his voice is always gentle, always tender.

When the Holy Spirit is touching something in our life, his voice is gentle.

When the Holy Spirit is challenging us, his voice is gentle.

When the Holy Spirit is 'correcting' us, his voice is always deeply affectionate, and gentle.

Listen for that voice.

There is no anger, or tension in his tone. He is incapable of frustration or disappointment. So those can never appear in how he speaks. His gentleness communicates to us the love and the kindness that fills his heart towards us.

Do you ever notice that often the first thing that God says, when he appears to people? He comes in with authority and power, but it manifests gentle and tender.

He comes gently saying: *Do not be afraid. It's okay. I'm here. Fear not.*

It is that overwhelming love, that compassion, that gentle, tender voice that opens our heart to receive any 'correction' the Spirit may be speaking to.

And that 'gentleness' coupled with such 'authority' in his voice comes to our soul and imparts an atmosphere of trust.

It is so important to know that 'gentle' voice of the Spirit. It is so imperative that we have an experience with his gentleness, because then you will have an expectation that this is how he will always speak to you.

This is my challenge for you tonight, train yourself to hear this gentle voice of the Spirit, and take time to soak in just how magnificent the goodness and the kindness of God really is.

Train yourself to hear the Voice of the Spirit in your revelation of who you know he is.

The Lord is the kindest person you will ever meet. The Lord is the closest friend you will ever have. The Lord is the most compassionate, loving person, who is always for you, never against you.

Listen for the voice with that revelation in your heart.

Let me give you an example. How do you hear the command of Jesus-*Be holy as I am holy*? Do you hear it as a booming harsh command? Be holy, even as I am holy?

Or do you hear it as an invitation? *You are clean, you are holy, because I live inside of you. Remain in intimacy with me, and you will live a holy life, releasing me everywhere you go.*

Or how about, *If you love me you will do what I command you to do?* Do you hear that as a harsh command to always be obedient? Or can you hear that command like this: *If you love me, you will protect those things that I told you are important to me.*

IT IS ALL ABOUT PERCEPTION. IT IS ALL ABOUT YOUR TESTIMONY OF WHO THE LORD IS FOR YOU PERSONALLY. IS HE YOUR FRIEND? IS HE THE KINDEST PERSON YOU KNOW? IS HE THE MOST FAITHFUL PERSON YOU KNOW?

The third and final question was: *How can I increase my sensitivity to the Holy Spirit? How can I develop a greater sensitivity to the Holy Spirit in my hearing?* Another really good question.

Let me QUICKLY give you TWO short keys to developing a greater sensitivity to the Holy Spirit.

#1-Key number one: always assume the Holy Spirit is present. Because he is.

The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 to, *pray without ceasing.*

I believe that verse is all about living with a conscious awareness of the Holy Spirit in my life. It is about me turning my heart of affections towards the Holy Spirit throughout the day.

It is that unceasing dialogue with the Lord that keeps our ability to hear Him at a really high level. PRACTICE THE PRESENCE! Throughout the day just keep lifting your thoughts to Him. Tell him how much he means to you, how much you love him.

But remember, this love affair is a two way street. I really want to keep my love account with God running at a really high level. So I am pouring in as much love towards God as I can because I've discovered one thing about God you cannot out give Him.

Whatever you give to Him, He'll give back to you a hundred fold. So I just keep pouring out as much love towards God as I can, because I want to experience as much love as I can.

So, how do you live in an extreme intimacy with God? You live as though God were beside you all the time, because he is, and you can turn and engage with him all throughout your day.

#2-Key number TWO-ASK THE HOLY SPIRIT QUESTIONS

Jesus said this about the Holy Spirit. He said, He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.

The Holy Spirit is the one who knows everything, and therefore can tell you anything. If you don't know something, have a conversation with the Holy Spirit. You don't know, if you don't ask. So why not ask him?

One of his roles is to disclose things to you personally. He is the indwelling and empowering presence of God within you.

So, you are going through something—just have a conversation with Him like He was standing next to you:  
*So what do you think about this Father? What should I do here? How should I show up in this situation?*

*How are YOU going to show up in this circumstance?*  
*Who are YOU going to be for Me in this situation?*

*Who are you going to be for Me in this moment that you could not be at any other time?*

And then stay connected-listen. He may not answer right away, he may answer when you least expect it, but stay connected and listen for his gentle voice.

So, I asked the Holy Spirit a question: I asked him how to end tonight, and this is what the Lord gave me. I want you to let this bypass your mind. Let this hit your spirit, and your spirit will flood this truth to your mind:

*Zephaniah 3:17-The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He takes great delight in you, and he rejoices over you with singing.*

You are the extreme object of the love of God. When God speaks truth, it is truth, whether we believe it, or receive it or not. It is still truth. You are the supreme object of God's crazy, radical love, and the Holy Spirit is always romancing you into that love. Always.

God isn't just a little bit happy about you. He's deliriously happy with you. Now your spirit is leaping over this, because he knows it is true. Do not let your mind talk you out of what your spirit knows is true.

The Lord is not just rejoicing over who you are now, He is also rejoicing in who you are becoming. So why don't you just sit back right now, close your eyes and let our BELOVED HOLY SPIRIT, rejoice over you.

I think it would sound something like this. Just close your eyes and let the Word of the Lord was over you:  
*Beloved, It's my nature to love. My love is unchanging, unwavering, unfailing towards you. I love you the same on your best days as I have on the worst.*

*It doesn't matter whether or not you've been rejoiced over in this life. I have always rejoiced over who you are, and who you are becoming.*

*I'm so delighted that we're exploring together because it is the great passion of my life for you to discover everything that Jesus gave you.*

*So be at peace. All day every day. We're so happy with you that we're singing songs of deliverance, songs of joy, and gentle songs to quiet your heart.*

*So, continue on in this journey. Love the learning as much as we love being with you in it. So draw near, beloved. You are the extreme object of our love and we so enjoy saturating you in our love.*