

EQUIPPING, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 08, 2023
EMOTIONAL PROSPERITY AND SELF-MASTERY

- What would life be like for you, if you would choose to allow the Holy Spirit, to instruct your emotions in how to feel?
- What would life be like for you, if you would choose to allow the Holy Spirit, to instruct your mind on what to think about?
- What would life be like for you, if you would choose to allow the Holy Spirit, to tell your will—the kind of choices to make?
- What would life be like for you, if every choice you made, you made in conjunction with the Holy Spirit?

Well, that would be a ‘spirit-led’ life.

That would be life directed by the impulses of the spirit; not the cravings of the soul.

Ya know, God has made every one of us with the capacity for deep cravings, deep thirsts, strong passions, and His desire, of course, is to see those things fulfilled in Him, but we live in what I call a clash-of-passions where our soul wants to see all his cravings for self, fulfilled.

Living with self-mastery reveals a Christ-follower who knows how to rule and reign in his inner world, who knows how to surrender his soul, his will to his spirit-man.

And so tonight, I want to talk about passion and self-mastery, because both of those subjects are vitally important on this process of being a Christ-follower, and maturing from an apprentice of Jesus, into a disciple of Jesus, into becoming just like Jesus.

I personally have seen so many start out this life with Jesus really well, and then, not end well.

Oh, I don’t mean they necessarily walk away from Jesus, although many have-but a high percentage of those who don’t end well, still keep Jesus as a ‘part of their life’-He is just not everything to them, as he once was.

It takes *tenacity and resilience* as a Christ-follower, to start and end really well.

It takes commitment. It takes *tenacity*.

It takes *resilience, to stay the course* to becoming, just like Jesus.

That is our goal as Christ-followers. To move from apprentices, to disciples to becoming just like our Beloved Jesus.

One of my prayers for me personally is: *Holy Spirit, please continue to imprint more and more of your heart and nature in my life. Continue to help me develop more of your Nature in me;*

*Lord, help me to be as **compassionate** as you:*

*As **kind** as you.*

*As **gracious** as you.*

*As **passionate** as you.*

*As **loving** as you.*

*As **merciful** as you, a*

*As **faithful** as you.*

Please come and live inside of me so powerfully that I could be the very model and example of who you are, so when people see me that would understand the very nature of who you are, because of who they see of you in my life.

I am always amazed at the story of when Judas betrayed Jesus. In **John 18** Judas brings a detachment of troops and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees to arrest Jesus. They had one purpose in mind, to capture and arrest Jesus. Now Judas was with them. Judas was very familiar with Jesus, and it was not possible that these soldiers did not know who Jesus was by sight.

I mean, he had not been hiding out. He walked around town creating excitement wherever he went. Everyone he touched got healed; he raised dead people back to life, he turned water into wine. These guys had to know who Jesus was.

And so Judas and these soldiers arrive, and Jesus steps up and asks them, *Who are you seeking?* In my mind I would think they would say- *You. We have come to get you.* But they didn't. They said: *We are looking for Jesus.* To me, that's a bit confusing.

Jesus says: *That's me*, and as soon as he said that, the Spirit dropped in power and they all fell to the ground. When they got up, again Jesus asked them again: *Whom are you looking for, and they said, Jesus of Nazareth. And again, Jesus said, here I am.*

What was going on here? Why were these guys confused about who Jesus was?

I believe they were confused because, Jesus' followers, his apprentices, his disciples **had become so much like Jesus that these guys who came to arrest Jesus could not figure out which one of them was actually Jesus.**

Peter was standing there. John was standing there. Luke was standing there. All the disciples were standing there with Jesus, all of them looking so much like Jesus the guards were confused about which one was really Jesus.

They probably saw all these disciples walking around doing the same things Jesus was doing, with signs and wonders following them, with miracles happening through them, that the guards were confused.

These guys had become so much like Jesus that the soldiers could not distinguish who Jesus actually was because, there was no distinction. That is our goal as Christ-followers.

Tonight, I want to talk to you about two essential elements inside the lifestyles of men and women *who thrive and develop persistence, and resilience*; **who have the capacity not only just to start well, but to finish well**, and the two elements are passion and self-mastery.

So, let's start with passion: The dictionary defines 'passion' as, *a strong a barely controllable emotion*. Passion is a 'heart' issue. Passion comes when your heart is ignited with a fire, a strong and barely controllable fire.

When it comes to having a passion for the Lord, you cannot go to your mind and try do **discipline** yourself to having passion. You cannot **manufacture or work-up** a passion for God. Passion for God *comes and increases* as you turn your heart of affections towards Jesus and he release his passion, *his strong and barely controllable fire*, for you into your heart.

Your heart than gets ignited with passion for Jesus, and you release it to him in *adoration, devotion, praise and worship*. And your *adoration, devotion, praise and worship* goes up and floods the Throne Room of heaven as a **fragrance**, and the God sends it back to you. That's the way it grows.

Religion is the one thing that will war against passion. Religion is the child of the fear of man, and one of the things that the fear of man does, is it prevents people from displaying lifestyles of passion. Religion relies on our own efforts. Religion believes discipline is the way to passion.

Listen Christianity was never intended to be dialed down to discipline. Christ-followers do not reduce their life to simply discipline. I mean, you can discipline your way through the Christian life and have some good positive things happen, because principles are true and truth works.

But living simply out of discipline will not help one finish well or cause one to thrive and develop *persistence, and resilience*. We were not meant to live merely out of discipline, we are not called to walk a tightrope of obedience out of discipline.

We are to burn with a passion for God, and all our discipline will come out of a place of passion for our beloved Jesus.

Here's the key; love the Lord your God with ALL your heart. Be intentional in your pursuit of intimacy with Him. Actively, passionately seek the Lord with all your heart, mind and strength.

Passion is the first of the essential elements inside the lifestyles of men and women *who thrive and develop persistence, and resilience; who have the capacity not only just to start well, but to finish well.* **Let's go ahead and pray for increased passion.**

Holy Spirit, I pray for myself and for every person in the sound of my voice. We know we can not muster up or work up a passion for you, but passion for you comes as you flood our hearts with your passion for us. So Lord flood all our hearts with your passion and love for us.

Lord, help us to never reduce you to a discipline. We want a burning in our heart and in our soul for an intimate friendship with you. It is just a better way to live. Jesus come and get us.

Flood our heart with the burning you have in your heart for us. Ignite a new fire in my heart for you, for more passion for you.

Holy Spirit, increase this burning in my soul. I am not content to fall into complacency, to level-off. I do not want to have more love for my habit than I do for you. I do not want to have more love for my hobbies than I do for you. I do not want to have more passion for my job than I do for you. I do not want to have more passion for the things of this world than I do for you and your kingdom.

Forgive me for any lack of desire or passion for you, and come get me Lord. Please encounter me with your passion and love and ignite my heart with an increased passion and love for you. Thank You Lord. Amen.

#2 The second of the essential elements inside the lifestyles of men and women *who thrive and develop persistence, and resilience; who have the capacity not only just to start well, but to finish well is choosing to live with SELF-MASTERY.*

Self-mastery is learning how to rule and reign in your internal world. Self-mastery is living by the influences of the spirit, not controlled by the demands of our soul. Self-mastery is taking authority over your soul, your mind, your emotions and your will, and commanding them to live under the authority of your spirit.

Self-mastery is living whole-hearted, where our soul and our spirit live as one, where the Lord speaks to our spirit, and our spirit speaks to our soul, and they live in union as one.

That right there is true spiritual warfare in my life. Ya see, I did not become a Christ-follower until I was 25. So, my spirit was not connected to the spirit of God, it was still dormant, and my soul ran my life. I was led totally by the cravings of my soul.

But when the Holy Spirit encountered me with Jesus and I invited Jesus into my life, the Holy Spirit entered my life. I became the temple of the Spirit of God.

We are told in **1 Corinthians 6:17**—that when the Spirit invades our life, that *our spirit and the spirit of the Lord, become as One*. In the original language the picture of this moment is that the Spirit wears our spirit like a glove. From that moment on, our spirit lives in the spirit of the Lord 24x7.

The moment that happens, we are now back in our creative order, we are back in the order that God designed us. We are told in **1 Thessalonians 5** that we were created—*spirit, soul and body*, and in God's original design He intended to communicate with our human spirit, then our human spirit would commune with our soul.

God works FROM the spirit-to the soul, to the body. The Lord ONLY communes with our spirit—because the Apostle Paul tells us in **1 Corinthians 2:14**—tells us—*the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*.

Our mind can process INFORMATION—but it is our Spirit that receives REVELATION. Life works best, when we live in the way we were created; to live whole-hearted, to live with our spirit and our soul united.

Our spirit only responds to the spirit of the Lord. Our spirit is not affected by external issues, because it lives in that **Psalms 91** secret place.

The Father did an amazing thing for us when he put us into the one place where we would always be in the Presence of the Lord. He put us into the one place where we would always find peace, rest and stillness. He put us into the one place where we would always find joy.

He put us into the one place where we would always discover the insight of the Lord on every circumstance and situation of life.

He put us into Christ and He said, stay there, remain there, abide there, live there. All throughout the New Testament, especially in the *epistles*, we read those words to choose to abide there, to remain in *life-union* with the Lord.

Now, we would not be told over and over to abide there, if we did not have a choice. And we do. When can choose to come out of that place of abiding and live primarily under the influence of our souls, apart from any input from the spirit.

It is a soul-led life and when you read **Romans, Galatians and Colossians**, you will read Paul's descriptions of the fruit of both, the soul-led life and the spirit-led life. The

distinctions of the fruit evidenced by the fruit of the soul and the fruit of the spirit are very clear.

When one is very active in their physical appetites, emotional appetites and intellectual appetites that do not get channeled or directed through your spirit, then you, in that moment are living under the influence and the direction of the soul.

That is why self-mastery is so critical. Surrendering yourself to the Lord is winning that battle to submit your soul to your spirit.

Now that does not just happen because we surrender our lives to Jesus. Surrender and yielding is the first step. Self-mastery then comes into play. We cannot come under that deception that the moment we surrender our lives to Jesus, he takes over, and we just cruise through life.

I mean, that sounds really good, but it is not realistic, it is not Scriptural and it absolutely does not work. Surrendering your life to Jesus is not *abdicating responsibility* for your life.

There is no level of spirituality where you will ever be allowed to abdicate responsibility for you. There is no level of spirituality, where giving God ownership of your life allows you to no longer take ownership of your own life.

When I made a choice to surrender my life, to Jesus, in that choice I DID NOT abdicate the responsibility of my life to the Lord. Surrendering our life to the Lord is a beautiful, necessary and sincere act, but the moment we do that, Jesus hands our life right back to us and says, *Let's write the story of your life together.*

Now, self-mastery is not something I came up with. The first time I really heard of self-mastery came from God Himself.

Let me show you where it shows up in the Bible. Let's look together in **Genesis 4**, and the story of two brothers Cain and Abel, picking it up in **verse 2** where Eve had given birth to two sons, Cain and Abel.

When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground. When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the Lord. Abel also brought a gift, the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock.

The Lord accepted Abel and his gift, but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected.

*Why are you so angry? The Lord asked Cain. Why do you look so dejected? You will be accepted if you do what is right, but if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. **But you must subdue and be its master.***

Self-mastery is God's idea.

Both Cain and Abel were instructed by God to bring an offering to him. Abel brought the offering exactly as God had instructed, but Cain decided to go rogue and to take God an offering of his own design, and God did not accept Cain's offering, which ticked Cain off. And the Lord asked him:

Why is your face gloomy? If you do well, will your face not be cheerful. And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door, and its desire is for you.

And then here is the key verse: *But you must master it.*

God is having a conversation with Cain and letting him know about the power in CHOOSING. Cain, the choice is in your hands, you have the power to choose. **You not only have the power to choose what is wrong, but you have the power to choose what is right.**

You have the power to choose between obeying, and not obeying.
You have the power to choose between what is good or evil.
You have the power to choose to live by your values, or choose to violate your values.
You have the power to choose self-mastery.

**And self-mastery begins with taking ownership of your life.
Self-mastery means taking ownership of your choices.**

No one makes you angry.
No one makes you bitter.
No one makes you offended.
No one makes you a victim.

Those are all choices you make. We are all making choices.
Life in the spirit is really all about making choices.

Here's the thing, God will often allow events and circumstances into our life that he could have easily prevented by his power, but he allows them for a purpose. His purpose is for those events to cause us to turn our heart of affections towards him, to align our whole-heart with him, and from that place see more and more of his nature developed in us.

It is part of the process of the Christ-follower becoming more and more like Jesus.

Now the enemy also has an agenda in what God allows into our life, and that agenda is for us to take everything on board in our soul, in our mind, our emotions in our 'how-is-this-affecting-me now space, and reacting with a fruit of the soul. Then more and more of the nature of the enemy is developed in us.

In self-mastery we are learning to move from reaction to response.

In self-mastery we are discovering that behind every set of events and circumstances in our life, is God's development plan for us.

But here's the thing. It is a choice. Choosing is the most spiritual thing we will do.

One choice, self-mastery will lead to us seeing more of more of the nature of Jesus developed in us.

One choice, will develop more of the victim mentality in us.

The victim mentality is so destructive because it causes you to lay blame on someone else, or something else, but never you. You never own your own choices.

Victim behavior abdicates all responsibility for choices and consequences and honestly that carries way more weight than we give it. Why? Why is it so important, especially in the realm of the spirit, that we own our choices?

Because whoever is responsible is the one who has the power to implement the change.

When we blame someone else for our lives, and for our choices, we are abdicating the power to change our lives.

As long as you put the blame out there, on others, as long as you refuse to take ownership for your life, you will not be able to take hold of the power to transform your own life.

Now we come across this honestly, because abdicating our responsibility started way back in the garden.

Adam and Eve ate from the tree that God told them was off-limits to them, and when God asked them what they had done, they absolutely did not own their own choices.

Both Adam and Eve abdicated the responsibility for their choice. They were the first people to ever *exhibit* **victim behavior**.

Adam blamed Eve by saying: *The woman you put here with me gave me some of the fruit and I ate it.* And Eve blamed the serpent.

The first response for both Adam and Eve is to abdicate responsibility for their poor choice. They immediately abandoned responsibility for their choices, and they put the blame on someone else.

One of the things that I so love about our youngest Grandson Camden, who just turned 3, is that he often goes into third person when he talks about himself. He will do something, and say *He just said that. He just did that.*

The other night we were having dinner with Camden and his parents and Camden threw some of his food he did not want on the floor, and his dad addressed him and said, *Cam, we don't throw food on the floor.* And Cam turned to Karissa and I and said, *He threw food on the floor.*

And his dad looked at Camden and said, *No, he didn't throw food on the floor, you did.*

It was just a light moment, but it got me thinking-that's what we do. We abdicate responsibility for our actions so quickly.

And I wonder how many times in our lives we have created a language of deflecting responsibility.

Now, I am not **eliminating or downplaying** the things that are happening or have happened in our life that have caused damage and harm to our psyche.

We can look at problems and situations in our life where the actions of others really did do damage and harm to us. Their actions were primarily responsible.

Well, my parents, they were not there for me; they neglected me. They did not know how to show love and I felt abandoned, or orphaned. They didn't give me the guidance I needed; they didn't protect me.

For sure we can find people who deserve the blame for acts and experiences that were horrific in our life.

I am not denying that, but when we blame someone else for our lives, we are abdicating the power to change our lives. We are still giving people who hurt us power over our lives.

And I really want you to hear this: **No matter what has happened to in your life and whether it was unfair or not-the absolute reality is this:**

The circumstance and the events will not have as much of an effect and impact upon your life, as will how you choose to respond to what has happened to you.

Your response to life has more power to shape who you are, than what life can throw at you.

It all comes back to Self-mastery! We do not always have control over the things that come into our life, but we have 100% control over the way we respond or react to them.

The real evidence of spiritual maturity, and of self-mastery is that we stop involving God in the consequences of our choices, and start involving God in the choices. Because it's in the choices where we have to have self-mastery.

- Instead of making the choice that is easy
- Instead of making the choice that gives us temporary satisfaction
- Instead of making the choice that our soul, our will is demanding we make
- Instead of making the choice that makes life easier
- Instead of making a choice we know violates one of our core-values

Choose self-mastery, and make the choice that actually creates the future you long for.

How much ownership do you have over your life right now? Am I exercising self-mastery and am I taking ownership in every arena of my life? Am I exercising self-mastery over my:

- My Physical health?
- My emotional health?
- My spiritual health?
- My job?
- My role as a wife/husband?
- My role as a parent/grandparent

Am I exercising self-mastery and ownership over:

- My choices?
- My habits?
- My soul? My feelings? My mind?
- My relationships?

Take some time this week to look at every aspect of your life and begin to identify all those areas in your life that are not an expression of who you want to be. Then ask yourself, what are the choices I need to make right now to take ownership in that area of my life.

My relationship with my wife isn't the way it needs to be with my husband isn't the way it needs to be. So ask yourself, what are the choices, I need to take ownership of right now to begin to make this relationship what I want it to be.

My career is stealing my energy and my time. What choices to I need to take self-mastery and ownership of that?

If you want to be really courageous, look at everywhere in your life where you've allowed yourself to be a victim, everywhere in your life where you blame someone else, for your circumstance or situation, everywhere in your life where you've blamed someone else from stealing from you and your future.

And instead of blaming someone else for the life you have, choose today to take ownership and begin to step into the creation of a new life.

Christ-followers, men and women who persevere, who show resilience, who are not just great starters, but they are great finishers who live a life full, where they can look back on their lives and know that they are living the life they were created to live without regrets, are those who are living with self-mastery and have taken ownership of their lives.

They have made a choice to stop blaming others, even when there are legitimate claims to blame others, they choose to forgive, because they want no one to have power over their life.

Self-mastery is partnering with Holy Spirit and saying, I am giving no one else power over who I am, except you, Jesus. I am going to trust you with everything I am. I'm going to allow you to do a work in me that I cannot do for myself.

Holy Spirit, to accomplish this I need to live intimately with you. I choose to partner with you in complete surrender. I cannot do this alone.

Let's pray: *Holy Spirit, to really become the person I long to be, to really step into a future that is greater than anything I could think, dream or imagine, I need you. I cannot do this alone. I need to partner in a deep friendship with you in this place of surrender. Jesus, without any reservation I give myself completely to you. You have all of me.*

I give you all of me, all of my life, my hopes, my dreams, and I know we do this life together. We are co-laborers in this surrender. I choose to take ownership of my life in partnership with you Holy Spirit. Let's journey together. Thank You Lord. Amen

Thanks for listening. There was a lot in there, and Karissa will send you all my notes. Next month I am going to continue with part 2 on this subject of self-mastery, and talk about the importance of having self-mastery in our thinking, in our mindsets.

