

THE ONE THING

PART FOUR – THE FATHER & HIS SON

REVIEW

So we began a new series three weeks ago on the subject of spending time in God's presence and fellowshiping with God. We are calling it "The One Thing" because the Scriptures are explicit that there is just one thing that is needful and vital.

We saw this from the familiar story of Martha and her sister Mary – how Jesus was invited into Martha's home and while He was sitting in her home, fellowshiping with them, Martha was in the kitchen "distracted with much serving."

So we saw that even our service for the Lord can "serve" as a distraction from what is most needed – namely, our personal relationship with the Lord. And we must guard against this because it is easy to make what we do for the Lord become our identity and take the place of intimacy with Him.

But we saw that the main reason that this story is recorded in the Word of God is to teach you and I what is really important – learning to sit at the feet of Jesus and communing with Him. Amen! Jesus called this – "the one thing that was needed!" and the good part of our salvation package.

But we also saw that David, the man who was after God's own heart, understood this one thing as well!

He said in Psalm 27:4 that the one thing he desired of the Lord and sought after was that he would be able to "dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life." We came to understand that this phrase was not a reference to going to church every day, but it meant to live in God's presence every day – that is, communing with Him, coming to know Him more and more and asking Him questions and such. This is what David wanted more than anything else and I believe what made him a man after God's own heart.

But saints, what we need to understand is that this one thing is God's own heart: You see, if David was called a man after God's own heart, then this one thing that he desired of God must be what God desires as well, hallelujah! Sure, God's heart desire is for us to seek Him and desire to be with Him, but it goes both ways – God desires to live in our presence every day! He wants to be with you! He desires and seeks after fellowship with you! Amen!

But we ended last week's message by looking at Psalm 27:8 and seeing that this one thing is absolutely our vital need!

We compared our relationship & fellowship with the Lord to our need for charging our electronic devices periodically. Just like we know how important it is that we charge our smart phone on a regular basis, we must understand that it is even more vital that we keep our spiritual battery charged up by abiding in the Vine – that is, plugging into the Lord periodically.

So since God's Word teaches us how our relationship with the Lord is so important to our spiritual life, we would do well to heed this and make regular times to spend with the Lord and keep ourselves charged up with the life of God. Amen?

So, what we have learned through this series is that having a personal and intimate relationship with the Lord is our primary purpose for being saved. We learned this by asking two major questions:

1. What did God create man for in the beginning? We saw that it wasn't for evangelism or missions because there wasn't anyone in need of salvation then. No, it was not until Adam fell and was driven out of the Garden that being a witness was even needed. So if God originally created man in the beginning to simply tend the Garden and to fellowship with Him in the cool of the day, then we can be sure that this is the core purpose of God's creation today.
2. What is eternal life? We've looked at the famous Bible verse, John 3:16, and saw that God gave us Jesus, not just so that we would not perish, but that we might have "eternal life." And we saw that, according to John 17:3, eternal life is knowing God the Father and knowing God the Son – that is, knowing them personally, experientially & intimately. Therefore, we can clearly see that the primary purpose & calling of the born-again Christian is for us all to come to know Him, from the least to the greatest (See Hebrews 8:11).

So if this is the foundational calling for all believers – to know God and have this personal and intimate relationship with Him – then why would we think that our life will ever feel complete without this fellowship with the Lord? Friends, it is simply unreasonable for a Christian to think that they will ever be truly satisfied & content without having a good and healthy relationship with God. It will be like trying to fit a square peg into a round hole because you can be sure that if you are not fulfilling this primary purpose for your existence that you will try to cram something else into that void – whether that be relationships, fame, money, hobbies, etc.

Finally, last week, we looked at the primary vehicle that we use to fellowship with God – prayer. We learned what prayer is, what it is not, and how we can communicate with God more effectively through it.

So if you missed any of these past three teachings, I'd encourage you to go back and get a hold of those previous messages.

TWO KINDS OF RELATIONSHIPS

Now what I would like for us to move into today is some very practical things that will help us to develop a closer and more healthy relationship with God ...

You see, God desires you and I to become a part of His family and then for us to pursue this close, personal relationship with Him as any family member would have with one another.

How do I know this? Well, when one studies God's Word, one thing becomes very apparent: God is a family-oriented God. He created man in His likeness and image, so therefore, these desires we have for relationships (i.e. the love for our husband or wife and the love for our parents or children) are God-instilled and originated from Him.

So it should be rather obvious to us that family and relationships have been God's idea from the beginning. In other words, if God is the Author and Originator of the family, it should be quite obvious that relationships are important to Him.

You see, many of the ways things are in this world are a mirror of the way things are in God's kingdom. The Lord created things the way they are in this world, minus all the curse and sin that is in it. Therefore, when you consider one of the greatest gifts of life – which are the relationships we have – we are looking into a big part of God's heart and into His plan for His creation.

So to use terminology we are familiar with: God is a “family guy!” More accurately, you could say that He is the “family God.” This becomes even clearer if you consider the examples He uses to illustrate the covenants he has made with man over the centuries.

And this is exactly what we are going to talk about at least over the next couple of messages in this series – the two kinds of relationships God uses to describe our new and better covenant with Him. And in doing so, we will discover that God is truly a “Family God!”

In studying the New Testament, we see two predominant relationships that are meant to exemplify our covenant with God: the relationship between a husband and a wife (we playing the role of the bride of Christ) and the relationship between a father and his children (God being our Father and we being His children). These two kinds of relationships are the two most often used analogies meant to describe our union with God under this new and better covenant.

So why do you suppose God used these two examples to illustrate our union with Him? Again, it is because God believes in the family and in relationships! He is a family-oriented Creator and desires the relationship and fellowship of His creation!

Now here is a good question: Since these two kinds of relationships are used to describe our relationship with God, do you suppose we could look at these two kinds of natural relationships and learn something more about what God desires out of us in our relationship

with Him? Absolutely! There is no doubt that we can look into what makes a good and healthy relationship between a parent and a child and between a husband and a wife and, therefore, see what would improve the quality of our relationship with God.

So let's look at what makes these two kinds of natural relationships healthy and prosperous and, in turn, learn how we can develop our relationship with God.

THE FIRST RELATIONSHIP IN LIFE

So with today being Father's Day, it seems appropriate that we start by looking at the first relationship that we ever experience in life – the Father and Son relationship. Yes, let's begin this week – the relationship between a child and their parent ...

So what makes a healthy relationship between a parent and their children? Well, in order to answer this question, we need to first look at the parent's role in this relationship.

A parent must desire to spend time with their children, pouring into them the love and instruction that children so desperately need, especially during their formative years. For example, while a father certainly needs to show love to his child, his role is also to instruct & discipline.

Now God, being the parent figure in this relationship, absolutely fulfills His role. In fact, we see this throughout the Word of God as, through one of His first covenants with mankind, He gave us the Law and showed His disciplinarian side. I've always seen the Old Testament as Father God dealing with His young children. In other words, the children of Israel, being non-spiritual, were like adolescent/immature children. So God dealt with them in more of a black & white, letter of the law, kind of way. But then when Christ came and provided a way for us to become sons of God, Father God was able to relate to us more in the way that a father can relate to his grown up, more mature son.

Regardless, our Heavenly Father desires more to spend time with us than we desire to spend time with Him, and He is always ready to draw near to us when we draw near to Him. All He needs are children who desire the same and are willing to invite Him.

And why does God desire time spent with us so much? Is it because He feels some kind of responsibility as our Creator? God forbid, no! He wants to spend time pouring into us for the same reason any good parent desires to spend time with their children – because they love them!

You see, God loves you so much that He wants to spend time pouring out His love in your life. This is why He desires a relationship with you! This is God's greatest desire for each and every one of us: to pour out His love in the lives of His children and then to have that love reciprocated back to Him!

So from God's standpoint in our relationship with Him, He is doing His part! He is the perfect parent who is always longing to pour out His love, grace, instruction, & discipline

on all of His children. We are the variable and determine how good of a relationship with God we will have.

THE THING THAT RESTRAINS

Now before we go any further, let me address an elephant in the room ...

I understand that many of us had earthly fathers who did not do their part, and because of that, it makes it a little harder to believe that our Heavenly Father is any different. Yes, many of us have carried around that hurt, disappointment, and bitterness from the crummy fathers & mothers that we've had.

Well, let me share with you a couple of nuggets of wisdom that might help us to move on from those negative experiences:

1. Never forget – Hurting people hurt people: Yes, people cannot give away something that they don't have. So if our parents were never loved properly or never had it modeled to them how to care for their children properly, how would they have it in them to do any differently? The truth is, church, most of the time, people turn out how they had it modeled to them. Not all the time, because some people decide to be better. However, very few possess the resolve to do this. So I say this to say that it might help to show some mercy on our parents if they experienced the same thing from their parents that we did from them.
2. God is not the One on trial: Some then take these negative experiences they've had and throw the blame on God, saying, "Why did my Heavenly Father let that happen to me?" But most of the time that belief system comes from the false notion that God is in control and nothing happens in our life that God has not allowed to happen. The truth is, saints, that's not how it works. Is God sovereign? Yes! Can He do anything? Absolutely! But this does not mean that He is controlling everything that happens here on the earth. There's far too much stealing, killing, and destroying going on for us to believe that God is in charge of everything. That's clearly the devil doing all of that since those things are his nature and not God's. The fact is, God has given the earth to the sons of men, so in His sovereignty, He has delegated authority over this planet to mankind. Which then explains why there are so many terrible things that happen here on the earth, including the things that might have happened to you. So God is not on trial here. Just like our earthly parents couldn't protect us from every evil that is in the world, there is just the free will of man that does evil that the LORD won't be able to keep us from unless there is an intercessor or someone led by the Spirit to head those things off. Our Heavenly Father is a good, good Father, church! So we need to always stay on His side!

So what's important to do if we experienced these bad things as children is to remember that we want to sow mercy to our parents, knowing that we ourselves are in need of mercy too. Also, it's important to stay on God's side regarding these things too, not blaming Him for the things that happened to us. He is the solution and not the problem!

FEAR, FAITH & LOVE

So if our Heavenly Father has, is, and evermore shall do His part, then how can we, as the children of God, create a more fruitful relationship with our God? Well, just as parents have desires of their children and there are things a child can do to minister to their parents, likewise, there are things that we can do to minister to our Father God.

So let's look at a couple of these natural examples of what ministers to a parent's heart and learn how this can be applied to the relationship we have with our Heavenly Father.

Now if there is one thing I have learned through my observation of the Word of God, it is that God has three main things that He desires from His children. In other words, there are three things that our Heavenly Father looks for more than anything else out of his children because of how much emphasis we see placed on these things throughout the Word of God.

One thing that we see emphasized throughout the Bible is the "fear of God." Now, of course, this does not mean that God wants us to be afraid of Him any more than we want our children to fear us. That is not what the Lord means when He describes the "fear of God." The word "fear" primarily describes reverence and respect, and not necessarily terror or dread.

Proverbs 1:7-8 puts it very simple when it says, *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother."* So let's look at verse 7 this way – learning that this reverence & respect of the LORD is the beginning of knowing Him.

So just like a good relationship between a young child and his or her parents begins with honor & respect, a good relationship with our Heavenly Father begins with hearing His instruction, not forsaking His law, and reverencing the things that He values.

Therefore, what we see then that our Heavenly Father is looking for from His children is a reverence and respect for Him. And it is really not much different in our relationship between us and our children, is it?

You see, our relationship is strained with our children when they (particularly the younger they are) do not show us the appropriate respect for their parents. This is just the way God designed it – that the younger show honor for their elders. And we are deceived when we think that we can actually have a good, healthy relationship with our parents when we don't give them the appropriate honor. Amen?

But my point is – what does it do to your heart when your children show you the correct amount of respect, when they listen attentively to what you saying and they are quick to obey? It ministers to you! And it does this because this is the way we are wired—all because this is what God is like too.

So one major way that we can grow in our relationship with God is by having a heart that honors Him – showing Him the respect that He is due and heeding the things that He tells us through His Spirit and His Word.

This “fear of the father” will also prompt us to be quick to repent and slow to transgress Him. It will even propel us to periodically bend our knee and lay prostrate as we pray and worship Him.

And this leads me to the next big desire of our Heavenly Father: Secondly, God desires to be believed!

This should be rather obvious by looking at all of the Scriptures in God’s Word that speak of having faith in God, trusting in Him, etc. There are far too many to count! But there is one thing we can count: How many times the Bible tells us not to fear – 365 times! And we must see fear in the proper light – basically not trusting and believing in God.

So, yes, believing in our Father is a super huge desire of His heart. And is it really so different with us? Does it not bless us when our children show that they trust us? Does it not minister to us when they believe what we say? I know personally that it meant a lot to me that when Levi was younger, how he would recall things I’ve said, showing me that he was actually listening to me and put credence in the things I said.

Well, God is not any different, my friends! He told us to remind Him of His Word and the things He’s said (Isaiah 43:26). He loves to hear His children putting faith in His Word! In fact, the Spirit told us in **Hebrews 11:6** that it is impossible to please God without this faith in Him. Look at that verse from the standpoint of God being your Father – It is saying you cannot please Him without believing what He said. I for one, want to please my Father! How about you?

So another obvious way for us to develop a good relationship with our Father is to begin to take Him at His Word – that is, to become true children of faith and to believe our Father, trusting in Him by taking those leaps of faith into His open arms. Amen!

And finally, another very important desire in God’s heart is that He obviously desires to be loved by His creation.

This is clear in that Jesus taught us that the greatest commandment of them all is that we love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind. (See **Matthew 22:37**). This is yet another verse that we would do well to read from the perspective of relationship because it shows us our Father’s heart – that His children would love Him with all their heart! Jesus even went as far as including loving God with all the soul and all the mind. This means that God wants all of us, starting with our heart!

You see, God’s desire to be loved is also obvious because of the fact that He gave us a free will. And why did He give us this free will and not make us like robots, programmed to

obey Him? It is because He desires our love! He wants us to want to serve Him! He desires for us to follow Him as dear children who simply want to be like Him.

You see, all of these things that our Heavenly Father wants can be summed up in the following verse – a verse that in my opinion is the best summary of any & all responsibilities as children of God – **Ephesians 5:1**. This verse says, *“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.”*

This is one thing that brings joy to any parent – when their children start mimicking them and imitating the things that they do. It blesses us as parents when our children start trying to walk in our footsteps. Amen?

Well, our Heavenly Father is no different! It blesses Him when His children love Him so much that they start walking like Him, talking like Him, acting like Him, etc. It ministers to His heart just like it does when our children start following in our footsteps.

So my point is – if we want to grow in our relationship with our Heavenly Father, then one sure fire way to enhance our relationship with Him is to make our highest aim to be like Him. In other words, begin communing with Him about ways that you can grow in “godliness” – which is basically just being more like God in character, behavior etc.

Yes, start inquiring of the Lord today – “Father, how can I be more like you? Show me Your ways. I want to know You more because I want to, as a child of God, grow up to do things like you.” Do you know what this will do, saints? It will bless the Lord!

BLESSING THE LORD

Did you know that the Bible tells us that we can actually “bless” the Lord? Yes, God’s Word tells us repeatedly to “bless the Lord.” And while “blessing” Him is simply another way of describing how we praise Him, I believe that it also describes the effect that we have on Him when we praise Him.

You know, when it comes to our times of fellowship with God, the majority of that time ought to be spent thanking, praising, and worshipping Him. There is just so much in God’s Word about the importance of expressing these things towards our Heavenly Father that it just makes sense that this ought to dominate our times spent in His presence. In fact, we are even told that our praise is what ushers in His presence, right? **Psalms 22:3** teaches us that God inhabits the praises of His people. This shows us that God wants to be in the place where He is honored.

You see, just as a child can do things that bless his or her parents, I believe that there are things that we can do in our relationship with our God that ministers to His heart as well. So if you are a parent, think about some ways that your children have blessed you.

One of the primary ways I can think of that our children minister to us is when they do or say something good without us having to tell them. You know, we spend a lot of time

instructing our children in how they should act. For example, I am sure all of us have had to remind our children to say thank you repeatedly. But what really ministers to us, is not when they say thank you because we reminded them to, but when they say thank you out of a sincere heart and without ever being told to. In other words, they are doing more than just saying thank you; they are being thankful! This means the world to any parent and makes us proud of our children!

Did you know that God is no different? He does not mind instructing us and giving us guidance, but it blesses Him and makes Him a proud Father when we purpose in our own heart to do and say the right things (2 Corinthians 9:7). It is the motives of our heart that God is looking at. He, as any earthly parent, desires for His children to begin to do what is right without being threatened or even reminded. He wants us to do and say what is right because we want to, not because we are told to or are afraid of the consequences if we don't.

So let's take this another step further. What do parents desire from their children in regard to their direct relationship with them? They desire exactly the same! They desire their child's love – not just acts of love – but they want their genuine love with pure motives. Let me explain what I mean by this ...

Sometimes children know how to act to get something they want. They know how to come to their parents and hug and kiss them when they want something. But it means the most to a parent when the child hugs and kisses them just because they love them, not because they want something in return. That is when those acts of love truly minister to a parent's heart.

Again, God wants the same from us. He wants our praise, worship, and thanksgiving, not because we are trying to get something out of Him, but because we are genuinely in awe of how good our Father is and because we realize how much He deserves our love! You see, God discerns the thoughts and intentions of our heart and clearly sees the motives we have (Hebrews 4:12-13).

So if we want to grow in our relationship with God, we need a heart that does not come to God only when we are experiencing a crisis or when we need something in return. We should seek to minister to our Father by seeking and praising Him just as strongly in the times of peace and plenty as we do in the times of loss and lack. This is a way that we can bless the Lord and minister to His heart.

Just think about it, if all your children ever talk to you about is what they want you to buy them and what they want you to do for them, would you consider that a good relationship? Of course not! Sure, you want them to express their needs to you, but if that was the only time they ever communicated with you, wouldn't that hurt your feelings? What you desire is their pure fellowship. This may include them telling you about their day, them asking you for counsel or advice, or them simply telling you how much they love you. These are just a few examples of things that would bless any parent and make for a healthy relationship.

Likewise, our Heavenly Father desires us to simply communicate with Him with sincere and pure motives. He wants us to fellowship with Him over His Word, sit at His feet just to listen to Him, convey our heart to Him, and most importantly simply love on Him. He wants us to have a relationship with Him that is enveloped in sincerity, not in selfishness.

So these are just some different ways in which we can develop a better relationship with our Heavenly Father.

And remember, the ball is in your court! He is already doing His duty as the perfect Parent – always being there for His children when we call on Him, always providing us with the love, comfort and grace that we need, and always willing to meet us for times of rich fellowship. We are the ones who now must respond to this call for fellowship with the Father. And my prayer is that you will respond to His invitation today!