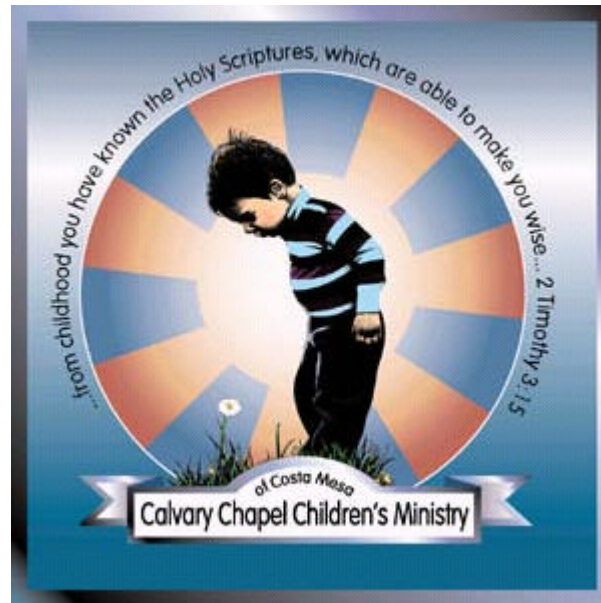


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# CALVARY CHAPEL CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TRAINING COURSE



## WEEK 7

### TEACHING THE WORD

PASTOR CHUCK SMITH

### PAST CM SEMINAR

PASTOR JON COURSON

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### Pastor Chuck Smith

All right let's turn to Nehemiah, chapter 8. "And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the Water Gate; and they spoke to Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had commanded to Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation, both men and women and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that was before the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood up on the pulpit of wood, which they had made for that purpose and Mat-thi'ah, Shema, Anai'ah, Uri'ah, Hilki'ah, and Ma-asei'-ah were standing on his right hand; and Pedai'ah, Mish'-a-el, Malshi'jah, Hashum, Hash-bad'-danah, Zechari'ah, and Meshul'lam were standing on his left hand. And Ezra opened the book", verse 5, "in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered 'Amen, Amen' with the lifting up of their hands; and they bowed their heads and they worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. And also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebi'ah, Jamin, Addub, Shab'bethai, Hodi'ah, Ma-asei'ah, Keli'ta, Azari'ah, Jo'zabad, Hanan, Pelai'ah, the Levites caused the people to understand the law, and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, they gave the sense and they caused them to understand the reading." Now if you don't know what expository preaching is, that's it. It's reading the word of God distinctly, giving to the people the sense and then causing them to understand. This, of course is the hallmark of the Calvary Chapels. The emphasis on the Word of God, reading the word of God distinctly, causing the people to understand.

In preparation for a service, I take the text that I'm going to be speaking from, and I read it in its context, probably twenty-five to thirty times, at least. Just reading, rereading, meditating, reading, rereading, meditating. I will often, then sort of jot down thoughts and ideas that come to me as I am reading and rereading the text in its context. By the time I've read it twenty-five or thirty times, I've got it pretty well instilled in my mind. Then I begin to think of passages in the Bible that might illustrate the basic teaching or truth of that text. I look for, "What is it seeking to say? What is the major thought?" I study the words, the key words of the text, and then I start thinking of Biblical illustrations. I've discovered that the finest commentary I have ever read on the Bible is the Bible itself. You can't beat it. It's a fantastic commentary on the Bible. And then I try to think of something that may have happened in my own life, in my own walk with the Lord where the truth of this text was made real to me, how I found it applicable in certain situations in my life. I seek then, to give the sense of the text. "This is what it's saying. This is what it means. This is how you can apply it to your life, to your circumstances. And this is how it happened in the Bible. This is the way it worked there."

For instance, Steve was sharing with us this morning, the fourth chapter of Romans where he talks about Abraham's faith. One of those four points of the faith of Abraham, was that he staggered not at the promises of God through unbelief. Now as I came across that and I was trying to prepare a lesson out of it, I thought "Where in the Bible do we have illustrations of people who have actually staggered at the promises of God. Now I know I have staggered at many of the promises of God. That one promise, "I shall supply all your needs, or the Lord will supply all of your needs according to his riches and glory by Christ." Man, I've staggered at that one. And where in the Bible do we find example of people staggering at the promises of God? And I got to thinking in the Old Testament, at the time of Eli'jah the Prophet. When the city of Samaria was under seized by the Syrians and they cut off all of the supplies, people were beginning to starve to death. They were selling the jawbone of a donkey for sixty-five pieces of silver, a quarter of a cab of a dove's dung for five pieces of silver. They were really hurting. When the ladies came to the King and the one lady cried, "King, help me. I want justice here." And he said, "What's your problem? I don't have anything." He said, "Do you want me to sweep the barns and see if I can find anything. I don't have anything myself. I'm hungry too." And she said, "No, this woman, my neighbor and I made a covenant yesterday that we would eat our babies. And so we boiled my baby and ate it and now she's hidden her baby. Make her produce it, so we can eat it." And the King tore his clothes, and he said, "God help me if I don't have the head of that Prophet Eli'jah", as he sought to blame Eli'jah for the problems. And so Eli'jah was sitting there in his house with his friends and he's sort of a character, I like Eli'jah. I admire him. I wish I had more of the sensitivity to the Spirit as he does, or did. Because he was the kind of guy you'd be sitting in there talking with him and then he'd go "Huh, wow. Far out. I can't believe it. Unreal, you know. What's going on? You know." And the Lord will be showing him something. He was so tuned in, so tuned in that he was surprised when the Lord didn't show him things. Now I'm surprised whenever the Lord shows me something. A couple times in my life, the Lord has shown me something. Got so excited, I lived on it for months you know. "Oh, the Lord... all right... you know!" All excited because the Lord showed me something. Rare, rare, but this guy was surprised when the Lord didn't show him things. So here he was sitting with his friends and he starts his old far out thing, you know, "Unreal. I can't believe it." You know. And they're like, "What's going on man?" "Oh, the King, he's sending a guy down here to get my head. Can you believe that? Now as soon as he knocks on the door, open the door and pin him, and hold him fast because the King is right behind him with a Prime Minister." So here's a knock on the door, and Eli'jah's friend's open the door, and they pin the guy, the messenger, and here the King came riding up with this Prime Minister. And he said, "Okay Eli'jah, you've troubled Israel long enough. Your time has come." And Eli'jah said, "Wait a minute man, you're the one that's trouble Israel. You're the one that's brought in the worship of Baal and the false gods. It's not me, it's you. But don't worry, tomorrow by this time, in the gate of Samaria, they'll be selling a bushel of fine flour for sixty-five cents." And this guy, Prime Minister on whom the King leaned, said, "If God should open windows in heaven, could such a thing be?" What happened? He was staggering at the promises of God. So I look for a Biblical illustration and as I

say, the Bible is a great book for illustrations. It's a great book for commentary. And so finding the scripture, giving the sense, giving the illustrations, you open up the scriptures to the people.

Now I notice here that the people were very interested in what God had to say. The people were standing from morning to noon time, listening to them, as they gave them the scriptures, gave them the sense and the understanding, "Here you are, kickback." Now, if we had the things scripturally, I'd be kicked back here and you guys would all be standing. Here they were standing from morning to noon, attentive to the Word of God, listening to the teaching. Don't give me that business, "Well people aren't interested in the Bible. They are very interested in the Bible. The problem is they have a hard time finding a place where the Bible is being taught. They go to church and they hear all about psychology and the latest kind of concepts of psychology. Or, they go to church and they hear all about philosophy, "Well, Socrates said, and Aristotle said"... it makes you sound very brilliant. "You can quote Socrates, wow!" But they don't need to know what those guys, their own contemporaries put them down. y don't need to know what the philosophers had to say, they need to know what God has to say about life. Many of those people that they're quoting... the psychologist... have you even met a psychologist that was really, you know, had his feet on the ground? Solid? Was a well balanced person? I had a psychology professor tell me, "Be extremely careful when you choose your psychologist because most of them have severe mental problems. The reason why they have their degree in psychology is when they went to college, they had all of these personal problems, they were trying understand themselves, and so they took every psychology course that was offered in the college. When they got ready to graduate, they found they had a psychology degree. So you hang up the shingle. Their lives are so often messed up and yet they're trying to tell you how to live. They've been through five marriages, but they're gonna counsel you on how to get along with your wife. People don't need to know what psychology has to say about life, they're still trying to find out themselves. They need to know what God says about life. And when they come to church, they need to know what God has to say.

Now as I read down in the eighth chapter, as God's word was being read, they came across the passage that talked about how that their fathers had built these little booths to celebrate God's preservation through their forty years in their wilderness. And they hadn't done this for years. And so they decided, "We're all gonna build booths. It's the seventh month. It's the time for the feasts of the tabernacles and so they built their booths and they began to institute again the prescribed worship of God. In other words, the Word of God brought obedience in their hearts. And so our tasks, as even in the times of Nehemiah, when they gave them the Word, they then gave them the sense, and then they gave understanding to the Word. I do notice that it was only the adults and those that had understanding. That is, they didn't have the little kids around distracting. A lot of times I get in trouble because we don't allow babies in the church, but notice here, there was only those who were able to understand. Why bore a kid to death. If he can't understand it, then put him in a class where he can understand it. Let church be an enjoyable

experience to him, not a bore, where he is going to sit there and fidget and you know, keep his parents from being able to concentrate and just keep things in a constant turmoil. It used to be, we had our family devotions at home and our littlest daughter would say, “Time for family commotions.” And so often when you have the little ones, that’s what it becomes, commotions, rather than devotions. And so, I just saw that as sort of an interesting side light to the teaching of the Word. And so, we have a task. People are hungry for the Word of God. If you will really study it, get an understanding of it, and then expository teaching is just the reading of the scriptures, giving the sense, giving the understanding of what it means, and people want to know. They’re hungry to know, and I have been observed that in every Calvary Chapel where we have one of these mega churches, it’s where a Pastor has been there for over five years faithfully teaching the Word of God. Every one of the Lord’s churches, and we’ve got a bunch of them, there is that one common aspect to that church. There is that solid strong teaching and applying of the truths of God’s Word. That’s the key for success. And so we encourage you to follow the example. And as you go, become a Bible expositor, teach God’s Word. As Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.” As has been pointed out to us on several occasions. Shall we pray.

### **Closing Prayer**

“Father, we thank You for Your Word, a lamp unto our feet, a light unto our path; Your Word that gives us power over sin, Your Word that helps us in the hour of temptation, Your Word that brings us rejoicing. Even as the people went their way rejoicing, because they were convicted of their sin and they forsook their sin and in finding the forgiveness, found great joy, Lord, we thank You that that’s the effect of Your Word. Conviction followed by the forgiveness, followed by the rejoicing, as with David, “Oh how happy is the man who’s transgressions are forgiven.” And so Lord, as we’re here right now, we want to make a fresh commitment unto You, that we will to the best of our ability and the enabling of the Holy Spirit, go to those flocks that You’ve called us to minister to, and we will be faithful Lord, faithful shepherds who will feed the flock of God that is among us. Use us Lord to teach Your Word unto the people. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.”

**Pastor Jon Courson**

Two years ago, Ministries Magazine ran an article on Pastoral burnout. And they talked about how for the first time in recent history, more men and women are leaving the ministry than going into it. And the reason is, burnout. They pointed out that the average Pastor now stays in the place of ministry where he's serving for two point seven years. And then he moves on or gets out. Why? Burnout. Now if that's happening in the so called professional clergy, burnout, man you got to know it's got to be taking place in the laity. People like you, who are serving the Lord, giving yourself to tending the kids, people like you all across the country are also leaving the ministry, leaving their place of service because of burnout. Why? And how can you keep yourself from turning to burnout? Well, turn with me to the illustration of ministry burnout in the Book of Leviticus, chapter 10, page 139, if you have the anointed version. (laughs) Leviticus, chapter 10.

Now to set the stage in chapter 9, man, revival was happening. The tabernacle had just been constructed. The work completed. And the Lord sent down fire from heaven to ignite the sacrifice that was on the altar there. And man, the people were thrilled. They were elated, as you would be if you saw fire coming from heaven and igniting the sacrifice so powerfully. And the people were just going crazy. It says, "Moses and Aaron went in", verse 23 of chapter 9, "to the tabernacle and came out blessing the people. The glory of the Lord appeared to all the people". The chabod, the glory, which means the weight, it was heavy; the substance, the reality, the tangible, visual presence of the Lord was seen, you see. "And there came out", verse 24 of chapter 9, "a fire from, before the Lord and consumed, upon the altar, the burnt offering and the fat, which when all the people saw, they shouted". There was a Pentecostal happening, man. "And then they fell on their faces", in Episcopalian liturgy. They shouted "Wow" and they fell on their faces in awe, you see. These guys were excited. Then the story goes on. "Nahab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer", little incense pot, "and put fire therein and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He commanded them not". Nahab and Abihu were excited. They were part of the revival. They were seeing the glory of the Lord descending. They watched, the people shouting, "Hallelujah" and falling on their face in awe before the glory of the Lord you see. And they said, "Man, sign us up for ministry. We want to get involved in this thing. This is hot", as they saw the fire come down. And they grabbed their little incense pot, and they said "Hey, we're going to be a part of the ministry team", thrilling and exciting you see, and they lift the little incense pot, and they were right in the middle of the happening when, verse 2 of chapter 10, "there went out fire from the Lord and devoured them and they died before the Lord". Talk about burnout. (Laughter) I mean, is this the ultimate illustration of burnout or not? (Laughter) I mean, here they are, signing up, to serve in Sunday school,

excited to be a part of the ministry and they grabbed their little incense pots and “boom!”, fire comes down from heaven and they’re crispy critters, literally. Burned out. What’s going on? They just wanted to be part of the revival, seemingly. It seemed to be the great thing to do. The hot place to be. “Hey, serving the Lord man”, but fire came down from heaven and devoured them. Interesting then, Moses said to Aaron, verse 3, “This is it that the Lord spoke saying ‘I will be sanctified to them that come nigh to me, and before all the people, I will be glorified’, and Aaron held his peace”. Put yourself in Aaron’s sandals. Here you are, the high priest, you see your two boys seemingly zealous in service, wanting to be a part of the revival, fire comes down from heaven and consumes them. Your two sons, now dead. And Moses comes to Aaron and says, “this is what the Lord meant when he said ‘I will be sanctified. I will be glorified.’” In other words, Nahab and Abihu, these sons of Aaron, were serving in a way seemingly that drew the attention to themselves, you see. The glory wasn’t going to the Lord.

The people weren’t focusing upon the Lord. This is what the Lord meant in verse 3, Moses said to Aaron very straight forwardly, “the Lord said, ‘I will be sanctified. I will be glorified.’” And Aaron, who knew his sons, knew their candidacy, evidently wanting to draw attention to themselves, held his peace, you see. Evidently, these were guys that were filled with pride, kind of like Muhammad Ali. “I am the greatest”, Ali said. True story. Ali was on a jet plane, flying to the thrilla in Manilla. And as the plane was ready to take off, the stewardess came down the aisle and said to Muhammad Ali, “Mr. Ali, fasten your seatbelt.” And Ali looked up at her and snarled “Superman don’t need no seatbelt.” And she looked back at him and said, “Superman don’t need no airplane.” (Laughter) Evidently Nahab and Abihu had somewhat of the Muhammad Ali mentality. They thought they were hot. They turned out to be. “I will be sanctified. I will be glorified.” But wait, I know that’s not you. That’s not us. Certainly today, there’s something else though, that strikes a little closer to home perhaps. Not only were they offering their incense in such a way, but it seemed to be drawing attention to themselves. But the Lord tells us here in chapter 10, that the problem was, they were offering strange fire. Verse 1, “strange fire”. Now, pray tell. What is strange fire? What does that mean? That they took their incense pots and they lit strange fire to release the aroma in the presence of the congregation. What does that mean? Well, I’ll read to you a few pages over from chapter 16, speaking of what was supposed to take place in the igniting of the incense. “The priest shall take a censer”, verse 12, “full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord...”. And his hands? “...full of sweet incense beaten small and shall bring it within the veil: And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony that he died not”. In other words, verse 12 and 13, tell us very directly that the fire that was to be used to ignite this incense was to be taken off the altar, and only the altar. The altar that had ignited when fire came down from heaven in chapter 9, as we saw previously, that was

the fire that they were to draw from, but what happened to Nahab and Abihu? It would seem though, in the excitement of wanting to be in the action, engaged in ministry, they lit their own fire. They grabbed their Bic. They struck a match. I don't know. Whatever, but they grabbed their own fire. They lit their own fire, and consequently it was not fire from off the altar. Thus, they violated a very essential stipulation and they burned out, you see.

Now, brothers and sisters, co-workers, fellow laborers in the Lord, you're going to burn out. You may have heard an exciting presentation, by some minister about being engaged and serving children. You may have read a book or an article upon the importance of serving kids and the opportunity that you could have in serving them, you see. But I'll tell you truthfully, you may be excited about being a part of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa, or Downey, or Golden Springs, or where ever you might be from, and say "Man, I want to be involved. I can't wait. I'm fired up". But you'll burnout if you're offering strange fire, fire that is not from off the altar. "What do you mean, John?" Some people are saying "Man, I'm fired up, because I just want to see people blessed. And I've got this burning passion inside of me, because I want to see the sixth graders blessed or the junior highers do well. Or the first graders excel", you see. But what happens in your desire to see them excel when you see them not do so well? They don't seem to be taking in or receiving from you in the way you thought they would or should. They're goofing off in class. They're acting up week after week, and finally you say, "I'm tired of these rascals, these squirrels. Who needs it?" (Laughter) "They're not receiving from me. They're not responding to me. I'm out of here man. That's it." Burned out. Because people will not, whether it's junior highers, or third graders, or pre-schoolers, or adults, or in the rest home ministry, I'll tell you the truth, people are not going to respond to you always in the way you thought they would, in the way you hoped it would be. It's not going to happen. There's spiritual warfare going on, the enemy is distracting, the enemy is hindering, derailing, and causing all kinds of problems in ministry. It's a war that we're engaged in. And if you're doing it just to see people do well, and that's your sole motivation, hey, you're going to burn out. "Well I just want to see kids get saved", that's what some say. "I just want to see them open up their heart to their life to Jesus Christ." But what happens if you find yourself in a situation like Jeremiah, who preached for forty years and how many converts did he see? Zero, zip, nada. And if your goal, if your fire, if your passion is to see people saved, what happens when, week after week, they don't respond to the invitation that you'll give them? You'll burn out. Others say, "It's just something within me. I need to feel fulfilled. I need to be involved. I have this desire inside to do this". Well, that will see it through for a month or two. But then what will happen, sooner or later, you'll find something else that seems to be more fulfilling, more exciting, like golf. (Laughter) And you'll say to the Children's Director and Youth Pastor, "Look, I've done my time. I'm out of here. And now I can't wait to go down to the course and tee up



Sunday morning”, you see. All kinds of reasons that people get involved initially in children’s work, in ministry. And that’s why they’re falling like flies and burning out so badly.

Only fire that is from the altar can be used to ignite your censer, your incense pot. “And what does that mean, John? Fire from off the altar?” What does the altar speak of in typology? The brass altar speaks of one thing specifically. It speaks of Calvary, the cross, where the fire of God’s wrath is poured out upon the Lamb of God who absorbed the heat and paid the price for my sin. He paid for me, and when that becomes real to me and burning within me and it’s no longer an issue of serving, because of wanting to fulfill something inside of me, or to see people saved even, or kids do well. All those things are secondary. In II Corinthians chapter 5, Paul said “It’s the love of Christ that constrains me, that motivates me. The love that Christ has for me. What He did in place of me. How good He’s been to me. That’s what motivates me in ministry. And that’s it. So regardless of how people respond to me for the fulfillment I might or might not have internally, that is not the issue. It’s what Christ did and does”. Two things here. I stay on fire day, after week, after year, after decade in ministry. I stay on fire and don’t get burnt out when I see truly what He did for me on Calvary.

Number one, when I see truly what He did for me, when I really get it, and focus on it, looking on to Jesus, the author and perfecter of my faith. My Savior, when I see what He did for me on the tree, I see Him hanging there, crying out “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” “Eli, Eli, la’ma sabach-tha’ni”, And I realize He’s hanging in there for me, pinned to the tree for me. In Psalm 22, He quotes and interestingly enough, in Psalm 22, as He quotes that Psalm “My God, My God, why has God forsaken Me?” As you work through this Psalm, write down around verse 5, He say’s “I am a worm and not a man.” What did he mean by that? Think with me on that. Listen carefully. Paul says “Great is the mystery of godliness. That God became a man and the man became a lamb.” “Behold” John the Baptist said, “The lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”, God becomes a man in Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ is the lamb. But wait, the lamb becomes a worm.” The word worm there in Psalms 22, “I am a worm and not a man.

The word tolaith, t-o-l-a-i-t-h. It blows my mind. It intrigues me greatly. For you see the word tolaith, is a word in the Hebrew that’s translated in two ways. Number one, worm, and number two, scarlet. Isaiah says, “Though your sins be in scarlet, they shall be” what? “white as snow.” The word there is tolaith. When you go through the Old Testament and you read about the scarlet colors in the tabernacle and on the garments of the priests, the word is tolaith. Worm or scarlet. Why? Because in Bible days when they wanted to make something that had a scarlet color, when they wanted to dye cloth, color cloth, they couldn’t go to the grocery store and buy cloth dye. So they would take the

tolaith, this little worm... they would gather the worms up and put them into a container and grind them. Then they would take the cloth and they would dip it into the ground up tolaith, and the cloth would take on this scarlet color. But the interesting thing to me about the tolaith is this: the worm that made scarlet color, when that worm wanted to reproduce itself, it would climb up the trunk of a tree, go out to a limb, fasten itself on a limb of the tree, reproduce and die in the process, leaving a small scarlet spot on the limb of the tree. Jesus Christ said “I am a tolaith” as he was pinned to the tree of Calvary. What was he doing? God became a lamb, became a man, became a worm, where he was pinned to the tree, the limb of the tree you see. Doing what? Purchasing John Courson’s salvation. Me! He was thinking about me personally. He took every one of my sins, specifically, and he died on the cross there for me, that I might be birthed.

They stuck a spear in His side, and out from that gash in His side came blood and water. The fluids of what? Birthing. The water breaks, the blood flows when a child is being born. Something was being born. What? You and me. Born again. Adopted now into His family. He wasn’t just dying generically for the world brothers and sisters, you were on his mind, you were in his heart, your sins were being atoned for individually, specifically, personally. You. “Come on John, that’s insanity” you might say. How could He accomplish that with just a few hours on the cross? How could He think of each of us and die for every sin that we’ve done? Herein lies a great mystery. We are told that Jesus Christ, the lamb crucified for the foundation of the world. We are told that when we see Him, we shall see him as a lamb having been slain. I do not fully understand, I cannot possibly apprehend or comprehend what that means, but I know this: the sufferings of Jesus, the work that he did far transcends and exceeds anything that we have, even an inkling of understanding about on this side of eternity. When we get there and realize what he did for me and you personally, we will fall at his feet and cast whatever crown we have for Him and say “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power. Lord, we didn’t get it. We didn’t understand fully. We saw through a glass darkly, but now Lord, we see clearly what you did.” Wow. The cross, fire from the altar, Calvary.

What if, you died today, and you go to heaven, and the Father takes you on a guided tour of the cosmos, and you’re cruising around and you’re saying “Wow, this is great Lord, the surfing, skiing, incredible. Man, skiing down Mt. Zion, and water-skiing on the Crystal Sea, talk about glassy conditions, it’s exactly... oh Lord, this whole thing is just ooh... “and you’re just totally amazed and deeply blessed, and the Father continues the tour of all these great things which just blow you out. And then He takes you to the far corner of the universe, and He says, “Look at that planet over there.” And you say, “Hey, that’s... “ and you zoom in closer. “Wow Lord, neat. A planet that’s totally inhabited by dogs. That’s great. That’s just super. That’s... wow. Let’s go someplace else.” “No, no.

Look closer.” And so you closer. You zoom in a little tighter and you see that that planet, inhabited by dogs is not so cute, not really. The dogs all have their fangs bared. Saliva is running down their mouth. They’re bloody, and devouring, and fighting constantly, crazily, wild eyes flaming from within them you see. “Oh Lord, that’s terrible. That’s sick. What’s the deal?” “The whole planet”, He says to you, “has been infected with rabies.” “Oh Father, wow, that’s sad. Wipe them out.” “Well”, He says, “you see, I really love those dogs.” “You do?” “I really do.” “Well, okay. Help them out.” “I want to. I’ve got medicine for them that will totally and completely heal them.” “Well, give it to them Father!” “Therein lies the problem”, He says to you. “You see, I’m so big and awesome, and holy, and powerful, that they don’t even acknowledge me. The only way that I can really speak to them and make this medicine available for them is if I send somebody to live among them and become just like them. That’s why I brought you here. “Let me get this straight,” you say. (Laughter) “Those dogs that are sick and bloodied and fighting and devouring each other, you care about? And You have a medicine to help them? “Uh-huh.” “And You can’t really connect with them because You’re so awesome and big?” “Right.” “And somebody’s got to become like them to relate to them and share with them?” “Uh-huh.” “And that’s why You brought me here?” “Yeah. I want you to become a dog.” “Wow.” “And not just any kind of dog. We’re talking Chihuahua.” (Laughter) “You mean, You want me to become a Chihuahua?” “That’s right. Humble and meek, and the lowly of mind. And there’s something else. When you talk to them, they’re not going to listen to you. In fact, most of them are going to be viscously antagonistic toward you. In fact, they’re going to sink their fangs into you and rip you apart and wipe you out.” “I’m going to become a Chihuahua, and tell these people that You have medicine for them, that You care about them, but they’re going to turn on me. They’re going to sink their fangs into me, they’re going to shred me...” “Yes.” “They’re going to kill me.” “Yes.” “But, but,... but after that, I will resurrect you from the dead.” “Whew.” “But it’s not that simple you see, you will then be resurrected a glorified Chihuahua forever. (Laughter) You will be resurrected and glorified, but you will remain a dog throughout eternity.” What if really that happened to you? I would say, “Father, I appreciate Your compassion but...(Laughter) You’re barking up the wrong tree, quite frankly...

Oh Father!” Brothers and sisters, listen. That’s what happened to our Lord, our leader, our love, our hero, our king, our friend, except for, the step Jesus Christ took down, to become like us; to dwell with us and die for us and remain like us, for He still is totally human. A hundred percent God, yes, but a hundred percent man, He’s locked into His humanity. He is our faithful, compassionate high priest, we are told in Hebrews very clearly. The step that He took down to become like you and me, is a step far, far more radical than if you became a Chihuahua. And when I hold the bread and ponder the cup, and remember what He did for me, the tolaith, the scarlet worm, coming to dwell among

us, to die for us, I get fired up inside and I can't help then, but say "Lord, what can I do for You? In light of what You did for me, what can I do for You?" That's why Paul said, "It's the love of Christ that constrains us, not love of people, not caring about the lost, as good as those things might be, but that is not the primary motive, it's the love of Christ. Jesus loves me. Look what He did for me."

Number two. I cannot help but be on fire when I see what He did for me, and secondly, when I see how He still loves on me. Not just what He did on the cross, and that's enough, believe me, but how He still loves me. How good He is to me, right now. His love for me, you see, it's the love of Christ that constrains me. A lot of you know, a lot of you are aware of the fact that Jesus died for our sins. God does care about us. For Romans 5:8 says, "God demonstrated His love for us while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." When did He die for you? When did He fall in love with you? Not when you were going to church or studying the Bible or teaching in Sunday school, He loved you when you were a rebel, a sinner, when you were at your worst. So don't you know, if He loved you when you were at your worst, when you could care less about Him, that He loves you now.

It will be like, if the first time I saw my wife Tammy. Let's say I went up to the door and knocked thereon and she came and opened it wide and there she was, cold cream on her face... (Laughter) curlers in her hair. An ugly blue fuzzy robe wrapped around her body, cherry bon bons dripping from her chin... (Laughter) soap operas blaring in the background, and I look at her and her blue fuzzy robe, curlers in her hair and cold cream on her face and bon bons running down her chin and I say "I love you... (Laughter) I want to spend my whole life with you. I'm going to pick you up tomorrow. We'll go to the chapel. We'll get married and we'll go off to Maui." "Okay", she says. The next day I show up and the cold cream is no longer on her face. The curlers are no longer in her hair. Her hair, flowing beautifully, her face, shining. Glowing, really. The robe? No, a white dress, and she looks primo. And I say "Wooooow! I loved you when you were dog bait... (Laughter) I loved you when... and now look at you! Oooh, let's go!" And off we go you see, on our honeymoon to Hawaii.

Do you know when God loved you? When you were dog bait. He looked on you and said, "I choose you to be my bride. I love you so much," so don't you know... everyone who's in this sanctuary... don't you know, that if He loved you then, when you could care less about Him, when you were caught up in your sin, He chose you then to be His bride. Don't you know that He loves you now, now that you're trying to walk with Him? Can I ask for your patience? I'm almost done. You've got to see this, if you've never caught it before. The implications for your ministry are radical. How did He love you? Oh you know the passage. Turn there quickly, if you can. I Corinthians 13. The classic

chapter on love, I Corinthians 13. How often I've read this passage and been so blessed, but at the same time, so bummed. I go "This is what love should be." And you know, that man, it describes the kind of love that we should have for the kids that we're working with, for the people that we're connected to. This idea of love, man, love is the key. If you give your body to be burned, speaking of burning out in ministry, Paul says, "But you don't have love", verse 3. "It's nothing." You can burn out man! "But if it's not motivated by love, it's nothing." Then he describes love. "Love suffers long and is kind. Love envies not. Love vaunts not itself up, is not puffed up and does not behave itself unseemingly, seeks not her own, rejoices not in evil, but rejoices in the truth. Bares all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Love never fails." And I say all outstanding, "But it's not me. Oh, I'm better than I was maybe a decade ago, but I fail still so miserably." Listen carefully.

Look at this passage through a different set of glasses. Love. Agape. What is love? I John 4:16 says what? "God is agape. God is love". This passage speaks to me about how God loves me and you, right now, today. God loves you and suffers long. Verse 4. He's not going to turn his back on you. He's not going to wash his hands of you because you failed to pray, to be the man or the woman that you should be, because you haven't been studying as hard as you could, because your motives have been mixed, because you've been struggling with some problem. He suffers long. The word long in the Greek means long. (Laughter) God loves me and He suffers long and I see Him there again on Calvary. And as they were cursing Him and spitting on Him, making fun of Him, and shaking their fists at Him, what did He say? "Father, forgive them. They don't get it. They don't know what they're doing." How many of you today have spat on Jesus Christ, or shook your fist at His face, or cursed Him? Made fun of Him? I dare say none of you have. But those who did, He suffered long, even with them. "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing." That's the way God loves me today. He suffers long.

He's kind. Verse 3, God is kind to me. How kind? He makes Santa Claus look like the Grinch who stole Christmas. What do you mean John? See this thing about Santa Claus, what is the deal? Simply this. People innately crave and desire and wish that there could be someone who was benevolent and jolly and fun to be with. Who would give good gifts to children. Oh the heart of man says, "Would there be? Could there be? Oh, I wish there was someone who was wise and yet jolly, generous". It's man expressing his desire to know the heaven above. You see, the heavenly Father makes Santa Claus look like the grinch, because Santa Claus is making a list and checking it twice, going to find out who's naughty or nice, but with us, Paul tells us that the hand written list of sins against us, the list of our naughtiness was what? Blotted out by the blood of Jesus Christ, God in the flesh. The everlasting Father, dying for me, you see. So now, He says, "If you being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly

Father give good gifts to His? He's kind, fun to be around, generous and gracious. And the list that was written against me, wiped out. God, He suffers long with me. God is kind to me. God envies not. He's not co-dependent. He doesn't smother me, because God's love is completely fulfilled in the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit. Did you know they got along fine before we were created? God was not in heaven saying "Man, I'm lonely. This is a bummer for zillions of years. I got it. I'll make people. That's what I'll do." That's not it folks. Father, Son, and Spirit, living together in perfect harmony, this mystery of the Holy Trinity, fulfilled completely. What does that mean? That means, even as I Corinthians 13 says, "God's love envies not", He's not smothering me. He loves me. He embraces me. He avails himself to me, but he doesn't, in the truest sense of the word, need me. He doesn't smother you or me. He's a loving Father who enjoys us greatly. Time doesn't allow, but go through this list in I Corinthians 13. Would you please? Sometime soon? And ponder and meditate on, this is the way God loves you.

In fact, in John, chapter 17, ... don't turn there, I'll just read it to you. Jesus said this as He was talking to the Father. "Father, I in them, and Thou in Me, that they be perfect in oneness, that the world may know that You have sent Me, and that You have loved them even as you love Me." John 17:23. Did you catch that? "But it might be understood Father, that You love them, as much as You love Me." Jesus said to His Father. "How can that be", you say? "He's the only begotten Son and we've been adopted." True. In our area, a few years ago, two boys signed up for Little League. They went to the Registrar and the Registrar said, "Hey, what's the deal? You're Jeff Smith and you're Steve Smith?" "Yep." "And you're both eight years old?" "Yep." "You were born in April and you were born in July?" "Yep." "That doesn't make sense. You're both eight and you're brothers? What's the deal?" The guys said "Well, we're not totally brothers, one of us was adopted." And the Registrar said, "Well, which one?" And Steve said, "To tell you the truth, we asked our Dad, and he just said, 'he adopted one of us, but he just loves us so much, that he forgot which one he adopted.' We don't know." The Lord chose me. The Father chose me to be a joint heir of Jesus Christ, to rule and reign with Him, to be linked to Him, to be intimate with Him as His bride. He loves me, and He loves you. Now what does that do? As I read through I Corinthians 13, I say "Lord, You love me truly. As I look at the cross of Calvary, I marvel at what You did for me", and I realize He loves me. And I go into Sunday school. And if they're acting up, if they're not listening or responding, you know what? That's not the issue. Ever been dumped before by somebody you cared a bunch about? Man, you wake up in the morning the day after you've been dumped, and you get into your car and on the way, you're yelling at everybody in front of you, or behind you. You walk in the office and your co-workers and colleagues look at you and they say, "Ugh, stay away from him or her today." You're mean and irritable because you've been dumped. You've been rejected and it just comes out. And, everybody says, "Stay away." Contrast that though with the first time that

special he or she looked into your eye and said “You know, I’m in love with you.” Wow. The next day you get into your car and somebody cuts you off... “God bless you”... (Laughter) You walk into your office and your boss says “There’s going to be a lay off, you’re fired.” “That’s okay, don’t worry about it. No hard feelings.” When you’re in love, when you’re being loved, by someone who is lovely, it just gushes out of you. When you feel like you’ve been dumped or rejected, not accepted, you become grumpy, and mean, and irritable. I challenge you today, in this first session, to a very simple and significant proposition. Do those kids know when you walk in to the class, Sunday, after Wednesday, or whenever you’re with them, they might be acting up, or squirreling around, or not responding, but do they say, “Wow, look at the glow on him or her?” Even if you have to share with them some pretty significant stuff. Even if the law has to be laid down... the children of Israel said to Moses, when he came down with the law they said to him the second time, “What ever you say we’ll do.” The kids, the ultimate Sunday school, three million children said to Moses, “What ever you say, we’ll do.” Why, pray tell? Unbeknownst to Moses, initially when he came down, he had spent, you see, forty days in the presence of the Lord. And it says, “He didn’t eat a thing.” It wasn’t because he was fasting, it was because he was in love, and he forgot to eat. Ever been so radically in love, that the meal before you, is insignificant? That’s what happened to Moses, he was just in love, amazed at the beauty, and glory, and love of God. And so when he came down with the law, what happened? His face was glowing. And the kids said, “What ever you say teacher we’ll do.” If he had come down snarling and barking, the kids would say “Legalism.” But he didn’t come down snarling and barking. Like C.H. Spurgeon said to his students, there at the metropolitan tabernacle, he said, “Men, when you preach on heaven, let there be a twinkle in your eye, and a smile on your face, and a glow from your skin. When you preach on hell, you’re normal face will do fine.” (Laughter)

And I say to you, When it’s the love of Christ that constrains you, when you see what He did for you on the tree, and when you see the way He loves you today, I Corinthians 13. For you, personally, you can’t help but go into that class, even if you got to lay down the law. But they’ll sense man, “He’s in love with God or she’s in love with the Lord”, and there’s something radiating from them that allows them to say, “Whatever you say teach, we’ll do”, even if it’s issues of life and death. Or, I think of a greater than Moses on another mountain, the Mount of Transfiguration. Jesus, He was glowing. What was He doing? Luke tells us He was talking to Eli’jah and Moses there on the mountain, about His death. But what did Peter say? What did Peter say on the mountain that day? He saw Him glowing and he said, “Lord, it’s good for us to be here, even though you’re talking about death. Let’s build three booths. One for you, one for Eli’jah, one for Moses.” Even when you’re talking about things that normal seem heavy, and depressing, and discouraging, if you’re glowing, your kids will look at you, and say “I’m glad I came today. It’s good for us to be here. It’s good for us to be here. Let’s camp out teacher, let’s

stay longer”. But if you’re not glowing and you talk about issues of life and death, man, their reaction will be totally different. You see, it’s so simple, the love of Christ will keep you from burning out and will cause you to glow, and cause the people that you’re with to be warmed up. How do you do that? Spend time with Jesus constantly. Keep your eyes on Him, talk to Him, walk with Him, celebrate communion. Meditatively, appreciatively, marvel at the love He has for you, as you study through the Word. You see, the love of Christ will constrain you and you’ll never burn out, you’ll just burn bright. And the kids will be warmed up. You watch. You wait. You’ll see. Shall we stand?

### **Singing**

Purify my heart, let me be as gold, and precious silver. Purify my heart, let me be as gold, pure gold. Refiner’s fire, my heart’s one desire is to be holy, set apart for You, Lord. I choose to be holy, set apart for You, my Master, ready to do Your will. I will serve You, because I love You, You have given life to me. I was nothing, until you found me, You have given life to me. Heart ache, broken people, ruined lives are why You died on Calvary. Your touch is what I long for, You have given life to me. Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full Him and his wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.

### **Closing**

May you never burn out. May you always burn bright as you take the fire from off the altar, focusing on the love of Jesus Christ for you and letting it be radiated and reflective from you. And thanks for letting me share and God bless.