Hosea and The Epistles of John: *Hesed*, God's Covenant Love

Lesson 7: Covenant Command to Love

Key Verse: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.~1 John 2.15

If you have put together IKEA furniture, then you know what it's like to cry out and shriek! While not speaking about their furniture quality, our cries of frustration and PG13-rated proclamations are the result of their perplexing instructions and unfamiliar assembly patterns (they are a Swedish company). The little people in their instructions, intended as "helpful" graphics, are meant to make clear the pathway to successfully sitting on your sofa before dinner. However, their illustrations can also be a source of humiliation and frustration as you are forced to re-evaluate the step number where you were led astray. Fortunately, the **Will of God** is clear to understand: love God, not the world. When God's will is not easy to live out or to understand, we can scream, shout, sigh, or shriek to our Comforter and Deliverer, our **Abba Father**. His quick response will keep us steady in His Hand, assuring us of His Sovereign purpose and our eternal safety secured in Him.

Abba Father, we come before You grateful for the forgiveness of sin for Your name's sake. We praise You as eternal. We thank You for Your victory over Satan so that we too may share in overcoming the evil one. It is humbling that You want us to know You personally, and even more, that You have united us in Christ so that we may love one another as boldly, fiercely, and intimately as You love us. Grow us into spiritually mature members of Your Church whose sacrificial love for one another reveals You as the true light shining to the world.

1 John 2.7-17 Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. **8** At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

9 Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. **10** Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. **11** But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.

13I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.

I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.

I write to you, children, because you know the Father.

14 I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.

I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. **17** And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

Diamonds: Once again, John uses hard contrasts to assure his siblings in Christ of the genuineness of their faith. His first contrast is "new" versus "old" in verses 7-8. Embedded within these two verses is his familiar contrast of darkness and light. Through the "old commandment" to love God (Deuteronomy 6.6; Leviticus 19.8), John creatively expresses his heart's desire that this love of God be made "new", fresh, and invigorating through the example of Christ (Matthew 22.34-40), but even more, through Christ's love poured out for us (John 19.30), and now dwelling *in* us (John 17.7-15).

1. John was rapt and transfixed when Jesus taught him about the supremacy of love as documented in John 13.34-35. What did Jesus teach John about the necessity of love and the hallmark (stamp of authenticity) of those who love Jesus (John 13.34-35)?

2. Read 1 John 2.7-11 using a few different translations such as The Message (MSG), The Amplified Bible (AMP), or The New Living Translation (NLT). Identify phrases that stick out to you from these translations. In verses 7-11, how is John expounding on the lesson of love John learned from Jesus?

3. Recall that John's purpose in this letter is to reassure the genuine faith of his siblings in Christ. What hallmarks of Jesus' love are found in your relationship with your siblings in Christ? How are you supporting and enabling others to "abide in the light" of obedience to God by loving as Jesus commanded?

John personally understood that spiritual maturity is developed, not transactionally acquired. His writing in verses 12-14 explain the progressive maturation of one's faith. Having been a first-hand witness to how Jesus developed belief of His Messiahship in His disciples as well as others, John understood the necessity of transforming the knowledge of Christ and belief in Him as Messiah into a relationship with God through Christ (1 John 1). John's instruction in verses 12-14 uses generic terms to describe everyone in Christ. He is not speaking to literal "children"[1], "fathers", and "young men", but instead to every member of God's church irrespective of their physical age or gender. John's use of ageist descriptors to illustrate spiritual developmental stages of maturing faith are in line with what pediatricians and mental health professionals use to provide accurate support for the excellent physical and mental health of all their patients. Spiritual growth into maturity is unlike human growth from infancy into adulthood in that it's irrespective of your physical age. John teaches that spiritual growth is accomplished through your knowledge of God and its application throughout your day in all your circumstances. Spiritual maturity is accomplished as you daily apply the basic, child-like truths about God. In doing so, you spiritually grow through the adolescent-like struggles of embracing your identity and purpose in Christ. Over time and through many wrestling matches with God, a mature faith in Christ is formed by Him. It seems unusual, yet a mature faith is confident and secure in the profound simplicity of "knowing Him who is from the beginning." (V 13, 14)

4. Again, using a variety of Bible translations (see question 2), describe the spiritual knowledge, truths, and/or understanding found in each of the John's spiritual developmental stages in verses 12-14:
    a. Children

    b. Fathers

    c. Young men

5. Evaluate where you are in your maturing spiritual growth. How have others supported and shepherded your spiritual growth? What do you need from your siblings in Christ to inspire, develop and/or maintain spiritual growth into maturity?

6. For those who know they are spiritually mature (which isn't tied directly to one's age), how are you supporting and shepherding your siblings in Christ who are spiritually younger, spiritually weaker, and/or spiritual adolescents?

John's second contrast is "passing away" versus "forever", or temporal versus eternal in verse 17.

7. What does John contrast as temporal versus eternal in verse 17?

[1]Scholars vary when interpreting John's first use of the word, "children", from universal church members to immature, new Christians. Rather than taking a hard position about John's literal meaning with his first use of "children", we encourage freely exploring John's intention to be encouraging to every stage of spiritual maturity.

8. What are the “desires” that are “passing away” (V 16)? (Again, explore this answer using the recommended additional Bible translations.)

9. Why are John’s instructions in verses 15-17 important for spiritual growth? How does John’s instruction in verses 15-17 lead to spiritual growth?

One scholar quips that “Christianity is not just about loving what we should but also *not* loving what we shouldn’t.” The people’s idolatry during Hosea’s time offers us a direct example of certain spiritual failure when attempting to both love God and the world. Just as Hosea called God’s people back to single-hearted devotion to Him, here John too encourages God’s people to remember that…“we can’t turn toward God’s ways without at the same time turning away from those that are contrary.”

10. Focusing on the lessons you have learned or observed through the first chapters of Hosea, what is the consequence for God’s people who attempt to love both Him and the world?

Deity: Abba Father~ (1 John 2.12-14) “...the Spirit prompts us in our prayer to call God ‘Father’. The preservation side by side of the Aramaic (*abba*) and Greek (*patēr)* words for ‘father’...seems to go back to Jesus’ agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He is recorded as having prayed *‘Abba, Father’* (Mark 14.36)...Jesus’ use of this colloquial and familiar term of address to God was unique.”[2]

According to Joachim Jeremais (“*The Prayers of Jesus”*), “*Abba* was an everyday word, homely family-word. No Jew would have dared to address God in this manner. Jesus did it always, in all His prayers which are handed down to us, with one single exception, the cry from the cross.”

“Furthermore, Jesus told His disciples to pray ‘Our Father’, and thus authorized them to use in their address to God the very same intimate term which He used.”[3]

Paul’s use of the Greek verb *we cry* (*krazō*) in Romans 8.15 is found in the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) to describe “the shouts of demons when confronted by Jesus”.[4] Its use is strategic because in various Biblical translations it is translated as to cry out, scream, shriek, call, or cry, much in the same way as is done in corporate church worship as well as in times we are privately before the Lord. However, Paul uses it here “not in enthusiasm or ecstasy, but in childlike and joyous assurance…”![5] This in no way implies or requires its definition to be limited to Paul’s context here in Romans 8.15.

God’s Spirit responds to His children’s cry, shriek, or joyous cry with solid assurance of His adoption of His child, now His heir to presence with Him (Deuteronomy 18.2; Galatians 4.7; 1 John 3.1) and thus His legal child (Romans 8.15-17). However, the legal privilege of being in the family of God means that His children, too, will suffer in the same way as their brother, Jesus (Mark 3.35; Luke 24.26; Romans 8.29; 1 Peter 4.12-13)!

11. How does crying out to your Abba Father spur spiritual growth into spiritual maturity?

Doctrine: The Will of God~ (1 John 2.15) Simply stated, God’s will is “God’s plan and purpose for His creation and for each individual. God does whatever He pleases (Psalm 135.6) and desires that all people do His will. Only people fully mature in Christ are able to do God’s will consistently (Colossians 4.12). God’s will is always good, acceptable, and perfect (Romans 12.2). Doing God’s will sustained Jesus for life (John 4.34). Sometimes, however, the will of God leads to suffering (Romans 8.28; James 1.2-4; 1 Peter 3.17), as it did for Jesus (Isaiah 53.10; Matthew 26.39, 42).”

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[2] Stott, pp. 226-227

[3] Stott, p. 227, quoting Gerhard Kittle on “Abba” in *TDNT*, vol. 1, p. 6

[4] Stott, p. 227

[5] Stott, p. 227, quoting Gottlob Schrenk on *patēr* etc. in *TDNT*, vol 5, p. 1006

"Christians are to strive to know the will of God for their lives (Psalm 143.10; Ephesians 5.17; Colossians 1.9). Christians are to discern God's will through prayer (Colossians 1.9) and also pray for God's will for the world to be done (Matthew 6.10). Jesus counted those who did God's will as His own family members (Matthew 12.50). They, like Jesus, will live forever (1 John 2.17)."[6]

John has reminded us of the simplicity of God's will: to love God, not the world (1 John 2.15). God's will is as simple as getting up out of bed to serve Him in the routine of breakfast, lunch, and dinner (plus snacks!) However, it can also be as complicated as leaving your homeland to serve Him in a foreign setting. Regardless, the pursuit of God's will is a daily, minute-to-minute relationship over a large affair.

12. What do you tell yourself when God's will feels out of control? Likewise, what do you tell yourself when God's will is easy?

13. How does living out God's will lead to spiritual growth?

Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer: Fill your name in the blanks and use this beloved Scripture verse as a springboard for your Scripture-Soaked Prayer:

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are [daughters] of God. For _____ did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but _____ [has] received the Spirit of adoption as [a daughter], by whom _____ [cries], "Abba! Father!"~Romans 8.14-15

Lecture Outline:

Aim: The deliberate, conscious choice to exhibit His hesed is God's will for believers.

I. Hesed for One Another (1 John 2.7-11) **T1:** God's will includes the deliberate, conscious choice to exhibit His hesed to one another.
   a. In which of your relationships do you need to begin to deliberately and consciously choose to exhibit God's hesed?
   b. How might hatred toward another be displacing God's hesed and extinguishing the light of Christ in your life?
   c. What changes do you need to make to exhibit Christ's love to the 'hard-to-love' people in your life?
   d. Who do you know that is walking in darkness?

II. Hesed for God (1 John 2.12-17) **T2:** God's will includes the deliberate, conscious choice to exhibit hesed to Him, not the world.
   a. Which life choices are keeping you aligned with God's will? Which life choices are keeping you aligned with the ways of the world?
   b. What do your cravings and lusts reveal about what you truly love?
   c. Which choices reveal you are more in love with the world than God?

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[6] Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, p. 1673