

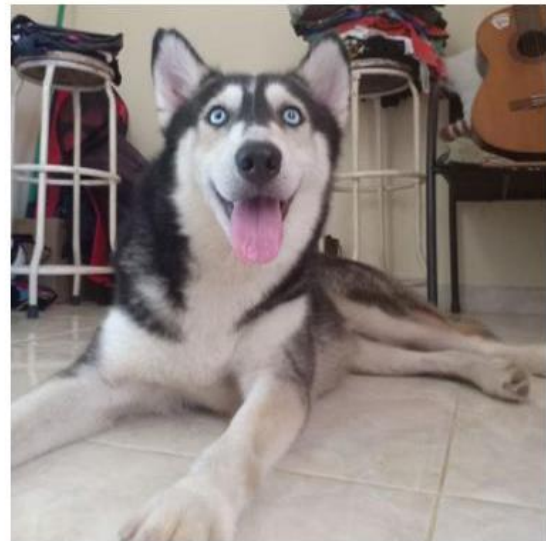


THE **JESUS** APPRENTICESHIP

Session 5:

What is wholeheartedness and why is it important to God?

Teaching notes:



In Ezk 16 we are compared to being like helpless babies kicking about in our own blood. Weak, broken, naked, surrounded in shame, tied up to our sin, spiritually malnourished.

Yet God seeing our brokenness had compassion on us, emptying himself of divine privilege and taking **our place** on the cross, the criminal's death, though he was perfect and did not sin. And now because of Jesus, we are free. Now because his blood covers us a new covenant has been established. Now we can enter into a relationship with the living God, enter into the holies of holies. Sin and death have lost their power over us and now He is transforming us into a new creation through his Holy Spirit.

But God didn't just nurse us back to good health, **HE DIED** that we could have new life, new birth. He who knew no sin became sin. He **died** for you and for me

And just as the dog's natural response was intense devotion to being saved, surely ours should be as well.

“Wholeheartedness is our response to His love.”

Wholeheartedness is probably best summed up in what Jesus describes as the “first and greatest commandment” ... the Shema.

Deuteronomy 6:5 (NIV)

‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.’

Whole-heartedness is devoting it **all** to Him. **Whole**-heartedness is surrendering it **all** to him.

“Wholeheartedness is our response to His love, with love.”

It makes sense, for if a marriage became void of love it would be hollow and empty. But love, **love desires to bring good to what is loved.**

I love how Dallas Willard puts it -

*“The people who love God with all their heart are those whose will is totally devoted to what is **good for God** ... To love God with all your mind is to take your feelings and your thoughts and to devote them entirely to what is **good for God**”*

Q - What does it look like for your **whole** life to be devoted to doing what is good for God?

And it's a challenging question, it's not a cheap question because to act on it will be costly, and Jesus doesn't shy away from this in fact he makes explicit that to follow him requires the cost of whole-hearted devotion.

Matthew 10:37-39 (NLT)

“If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it.”

NOTHING can come above.

SO WHY DOES GOD WANT US IN THIS PLACE OF WHOLE-HEARTEDNESS?

We actually see why in the lives of those who did, just like Hezekiah-

2 Kings 18:3-8 (NIV)

'He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father David had done. He removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. He broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it. (It was called Nehushtan)

Hezekiah trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him. He held fast to the Lord and did not stop following him; he kept the commands the Lord had given Moses. And the Lord was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook...'

As he devoted everything to God, God blessed him in everything he did.

Jim Cymbala talks about God having a banquet table set up, full of everything we could ever want, desire or need. In the act of utter devotion, we place ourselves in the **correct posture** to receive the good gifts God has for His children. God so wants to bless His kids.

The author here in 2 Kings is also trying to highlight to us that **this is the path of life**.

If we look down a few verses the author tells us that "Samaria fell" and in v12 he tells us why-

2 Kings 18:12 (NIV)

'This happened because they had not obeyed the Lord their God, but had violated his covenant—all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded. They neither listened to the commands nor carried them out.'

This is literally opposite to Hezekiah's devotion. Notice these two opposite ways have two opposite outcomes. The author is showing us **this is the path of life**. Let's choose life and life in abundance - for in God alone can that be found.

HOW DO WE PRACTICALLY PURSUE WHOLE-HEARTEDNESS?

Well, just like anything else in the Christian faith it requires both our intention and our dependence on the Spirit - cus we can only do so much.

And Hezekiah was a man of intention. His desire to do what was good for God was driven into being by his intention. And so he did two main things-

1. He **removed the idols** - placing God alone in the position of Lord
2. And then he **trusted God** - keeping God alone in that position of Lord

How to intentionally pursue wholeheartedness-

- Daily quiet time - submitting our days to the Lord allowing him to take control
- Regularly ask God to search your heart for what you have allowed within your heart which shouldn't be there
- A 'Coming Back' phrase (e.g. "for your glory", "who am i trusting?", "not by power nor by might but by my Spirit")

The second thing which is essential to wholeheartedness is our dependence on the Holy Spirit (unlike Hezekiah, we now have full access to the Holy Spirit!)

Because of Jesus the Spirit empowers and enables us to live a life we **could not live** on our own. Our teacher, our guide, our companion. In whom we are invited to constantly surrender to (less of me and more of You), so that our lives might be an offering that is good for God.

And so as we *can't* and *don't have to* do this alone

- Ask God to fill you afresh with The Spirit today and each morning of each day - create a note, a reminder (the kettle, where you brush your teeth, the fridge, the mirror, by the side of your bed, in your toilet, place a note on top of your phone)?

For trust me, we don't want to live a life where we are walking by our own strength.

"Wholeheartedness is our response to his love, with love by the Spirit."

Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

'For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.'