

“Choosing to Be Part of a Counter-Culture Kingdom!”

Matthew 6:19 – 21 and 32b, 33

Introduction:

As we turn our attention to the Word of the Lord, we are looking together at the **central theme of Scripture: God’s desire to Know us and to be Known by us, His longing to be intimately involved in our lives.** Throughout the Bible, God reveals Himself as tirelessly, compassionately drawing us, longing for us to come to know Him intimately as the Lord of our life.

The Lord God wants us to enter into the deep and profound rest He provides, freeing us from all our striving to find meaning and peace in life. Walking with God in an experience of salvation by faith is **a Miracle of His Grace.** Once we’re unable to know God and have fellowship with Him because of sin and sin’s power to enslave us! Because of what Jesus has done for us all in His death on the Cross, sin is taken away and we may enter into a relationship with God.

In this message, we are looking at the topic of the **Renewal** of our spiritual **Passion** for Jesus, a term that refers to our inner longing and desire to know God intimately. The truth is we need spiritual renewal because we all go through times in our spiritual lives where we aren’t walking as close to the Lord as we would like to be. Being renewed is what happens when God works anew in our heart, expressed by His people like David in Psalm 23 when he said, *“He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul.”*

Spiritual renewal is about restoring my spiritual passion after God, returning my heart to the heart of God as my first love, my rightful first affection. Spiritual renewal moves of God among His people are characterized by **His drawing us away from the values and the ways of this world system into a Deeper Surrender of our will and ways to the Lord Jesus at the cross.**

The Lord longs for us to give Him absolute control of the **Choices** we make in our **Will**. What He is after is for us to be **willing to be changed and Transformed by His presence in our lives.** The power of His indwelling presence to work change in us is never the issue! How much we really want to be changed – this is the issue!

The Lord our God reveals Himself in the Scriptures time and time again as a holy, hungry, passionate, and **Consuming Fire.** Listen carefully as we read Hebrews 12:28, 29: *“Since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.”*

What we need to see and understand in this text is that **fire** is **a picture of the fact of His Jealousy. This is not a human jealousy that is selfish or possessive. It is God’s love moving Him to desire to know us!** Remember the love of God, expressed in the Greek word “agape,” is a holy, self-emptying, other-oriented love that moves God to desire the very best for the people He loves. **Consequently, God’s jealousy is a divine passion to have our first love,** the first affection of our hearts given to Him because loving God deeply is the best activity we ever do.

Consider Jesus' answer when He was asked the question, by a rich young man: "What is the greatest commandment?" He responded, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself." Mark 12:30, 31a

The role and ministry of the Holy Spirit in my life is to produce three things in me: **First**, He will bring me to the Cross of Jesus, to repent of my sinful ways and receive His saving provisions. **Second**, He will produce passionate spirituality in my life. As it is the nature of fire to burn it is the nature of the Spirit of God to produce fiery love in us as He lives in us. **Third**, He will produce in me the fruit of the life of Jesus, to impassion and empower me to live in ways that are pleasing to God. He will do this as I surrender to His working.

Paul wrote to believers about our responsibility to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in, Galatians 5:25 "Since we live by the Spirit let us keep in step with the Spirit," and in I Thessalonians 5:19 "Do not put out the Spirit's fire." That is a word about our propensity to divide our loves, to have other things we desire. He is a person and as such He can be grieved; His fire can be quenched by our choices of our will if we turn away from Him and turn to sin and self-interest.

I. Knowing Jesus Personally – Part of a Different Kingdom:

Our Lord Jesus Christ came to this earth to establish a **radically Different Kingdom**, from anything known on earth. The kingdom Jesus is creating is a matter of the inner heart change done by God's powerful work in us by His Holy Spirit. **One of the basic beliefs of our church historically is that there are two kingdoms being built in the world simultaneously.** One evil and fleshly while the other one is holy, so they are exact opposites of each other!

The focus of the "Gospel of the Kingdom" is to Destroy the power of Sin in the human heart, mind, and soul. Jesus came into the earth to deal with our tendency to want to do wrong things, feeling guilty, and conscience stricken. All of the things that stood between us and God, that lived in our hearts, which was offensive to God, had to be addressed and destroyed if we are to be able to dwell at peace with God. Sin stood between the Lord God and us and we were helpless to do anything about it, so Jesus came to our rescue.

The Lord God looked on the human condition caused by all of the wrong things we have done, and chose to create the plan of salvation; to come to our rescue in Christ Jesus. The plan required one human being who was holy, pure, and sinlessly perfect to become an acceptable sacrifice for all of our sins, guilt, and shame that we felt. There was no human being that ever lived a sinless life. Romans 3:23 "we all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." **So, the Lord God came to our rescue in the giving of His One and Only Son Jesus.** John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his One and Only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Three of our Gospel Writers – Matthew, Mark, and Luke record the story of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. **Each of these Gospel accounts give us incredible pictures of the radical difference between the two kingdoms:** The kingdom of this world and the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus came to inaugurate!

1. Earthly rulers, people of position in this world system, ride white stallions symbolic of power, but Jesus came into Jerusalem riding on a donkey's colt. The King of glory, Jesus our Lord rode a beast of burden, in humility. Jesus was sending a message: What the world calls power God does not call power. **God calls Loving Sacrifice Power!**

2. Earthly rulers are praised by the **Elite of Society**, those whom the world look to as great, and who call themselves celebrities. But Jesus is praised by the least of these, by the poor, the former beggars, and by children. Because what the world calls greatness, God does not call greatness. **God calls Serving, Humble Love greatness!**

3. Earthly rulers are concerned about their own **Honor and Glory**, how people are responding to them. But Jesus was concerned about the Father God receiving glory and honor, that the people around Him be enabled to see and grasp the concept of the Kingdom of God that He came to bring to earth. **Jesus was sending the message that honor and glory never really Belong to Human Beings.**

4. The earthly rulers in the religious status quo of His day, the Scribes and Pharisees, gloated over Jerusalem, the people's way of life, their position, and status. **But Jesus Wept over what He saw in the city of Jerusalem**, their self-centered thinking, their preoccupation with wealth and honor among people, and their ultimate rebellion against God's will and purposes.

The religious leaders were proud of their temple rites, sacrifices, rituals, and rote prayers. But as Jesus walked into the temple, He saw that it was full of human systems of thought and deeds. **Jesus drove out the money-changers and called for a return to God's plans for the temple area as "a house of prayer for all the nations."**

The only logical conclusion one can draw from the events of Palm Sunday is that **Jesus came to establish a kingdom on the earth in us that is "Not of this World."** John 18:36 is what Jesus said when He stood before Pontius Pilate. *"My kingdom is not of this world. If it was, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest. But now my kingdom is from another place."* His kingdom is utterly counter-culture. It creates in us the exact opposite of what this world system values in the lives of people, their sinful and self-centered thinking and actions.

II. The Eyes and the Inner World:

Luke 11:34 – 36 *"Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness. Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and not part of it dark, it will be completely lighted, as when the light of a lamp shines on you."*

Jesus wasn't simply talking about what our physical eyesight takes in. When Jesus said, *"Your eye is the lamp of your body,"* He was giving us an understanding of a broader truth. Our "eyes as the lamp of our body," represent the **Picture we See or the how we Frame what we see, how we see things, people, and issues.** The **"in" word is "paradigm."** How we see things, people, and issues is based on our values and fundamental truths we hold deep in our heart and mind.

Part of your framework of how you see a thing, a person, or issues in general, was created while you were growing up in your home environment. From your parents and siblings you received a framework for how you view life, yourself, and others. Some of us grew up in healthy and positive environments and a part of our framework was formulated by it. Some of us grew up in unhealthy environments. How we see things is often negative, potential sources of pain, if we were raised in an unhealthy environment.

Part of your framework of how you see a thing is as a result of choices you have made in your heart. How you and I view life is conditioned by what we value, long for, and deeply desire. **Our eyes reflect our Heart's Desires: What we long for on the inside we will look for with our eyes!** When we come to know Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior, His presence in our lives changes the way we see things and filter information. Our paradigm shifts from self-centered to Christ-centered decision-making processes!

Jesus gave us some really straight words about having good eyes and having bad eyes as a result of how we choose to live, what values we choose to love. Jesus said we may choose to have either a godly inner value system or a fleshly value system that competes with the values of the kingdom of God. **Good eyes** are focused on the kingdom of God as the only true satisfaction that a person can find in this life! **Bad eyes** are focused on something outward to satisfy inner needs and the truth is nothing outward can ever truly satisfy inner needs!

- The outward pull of the **World's Allure** – money, status, power, or esteem in the eyes of people.
- The outward pull of the **Material** – things, possessions, the right car, the right house, in the right neighborhood.
- The outward pull of the **Sensual** – appetites for sexual expression, which are never satisfied for long.

Let's read together what the Bible says about these things in I John 2:15 – 17 *“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.”*

III. This World's Preoccupation with Sinful, Sexual Living:

John 15:18 – 21 *“When the world hates you, remember it hated me before it hated you. The world would love you if you belonged to it, but you don't. I chose you to come out of the world and so it hates you. Do you remember what I told you? ‘A servant is not greater than the master.’ Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to me they would listen to you! The people of the world will hate you because you belong to me.”*

Jesus could not have been much clearer could He? His words to His disciples stand as timeless words to the human heart and soul of every believer in every time frame. But for we who live here in this culture in North America, these words should call us all to see the cultural values espoused by people of this world system are wicked and vile expressions of sinful self-interest!

I was reading through the prophets this week and Habakkuk 2 gripped my heart. The Lord used these words to draw such a powerful and clear distinction between how people in His kingdom act toward others and how the people of the world system we live in treat others. The culture we live in is obsessed with sexuality and sexual expression. **It is so much a part of our national conversation that we actually have started to speak about our sexual identity.** Children are being taught to decide what gender they are based on how they feel this week!

Habakkuk 2:4 MSG: *“Look at that man, bloated with self-importance – full of himself but soul-empty. But the person in right standing before God, through loyal and steady believing is full alive, really alive.”*

Habakkuk 2:12 – 14 MSG: *“Who do you think you are – building a town by murder, a city with crime? Don’t you know that God-of-the-Angel-Armies makes sure nothing comes of that but ashes, makes sure the harder you work at that kind of thing, the less you are? Meanwhile the earth fills up with awareness of God’s glory as the water covers the sea.”*

Habakkuk 2:15, 16a MSG: *“Who do you think you are – inviting your neighbors to your drunken parties, giving them too much to drink, roping them into your sexually orgies? You thought you were having the time of your life. Wrong! It’s a time of disgrace.”*

The Word of the Lord could not be clearer. Sexual expression as God designed it is in the confines of a Christian marriage: One man and one woman promising one another to be their partner’s solely for the rest of their lives! The way a man and a woman of God treat one another is to be devoted to their partner in love, to view their entire relationship as a means to serve one another in love!

Every other expression of sexuality is sinful and is motivated by self-interest. **What culture sees and says about sexuality and sexual expression is steeped in sinful lust, which is based in self-interest.** When two people sleep together before marriage it is called fornication. When a person has a relationship with another person outside of their marriage it is adultery. Same gender sexuality and marriage is prohibited by Scripture.

Here is what makes sinful sexual expression such a societal ill. It is not an innocent form of pleasure between two people. **It is the result of lust being introduced into relationships. The essence of sin is our insidious self-interest. Lust is absolutely an expression of self-interest.** It is all about me and my gratification of my evil desires. And when lust brings forth its fruit it produces at least an unexpected pregnancy and at worst an unwanted pregnancy, which is often terminated by abortion.

And lust produces the hideous fruit of sexual trafficking of children! As a man who loves people, and specifically loves children, the image of a child, a little girl or little boy, being stolen from the security of their home and family and then sold into slavery and sex-trafficking breaks my heart. I can’t imagine the heartache the parents feel. I can’t imagine how awful it is for the child.

How men’s eyes work – they are indiscriminate, which means men are attracted to and stimulated visually by any and all female forms they see. It is simply the way men work, and is

not necessarily a reflection on their hearts being wicked. They are visually stimulated. The entertainment and pornography industries have understood this for many years. Have you noticed how the entertainment world presents women, women's sexual expression, and women's bodies in particular? This is the central issue upon which the pornography industry has been built: How and why it works on men and women.

Guarding the heart – I have heard it said that this is a private sin that hurts no one but me. Dead wrong! If we are viewing a woman in porn and how she responds, we are viewing a woman created by men for men and real, godly women aren't like that. If we are viewing that kind of woman it will affect how we look at all women, as objects rather than people! If you are struggling, find some men to talk to and make yourself accountable to. Confess your sins to one another and pray for each other that you may be healed!

How women's eyes work – they tend to be emotionally or romantically stimulated, the atmosphere set by time, talk, attention, words of expressions of their beauty, and by soft and sensitive touch. Because it is an act of surrender an atmosphere of security is essential to most good women. The entertainment industry has understood this fact about women for decades and has created a romantic fantasy world for women to live in, which has the net affect of having the woman enter into a fantasy about how her man stacks up to the man on the TV or movie screen and/or the novel she is reading.

Guarding the heart – this is not a private sin that hurts no one else. As a woman, you set the tone for the other people in your life; your husband and your children. If you have sons you are sending them a subliminal message about your thoughts about their dad. If you have daughters you are sending them a message that romantic fantasy is an acceptable escape from a real marriage to a real man who will do some dumb things he wish he hadn't done! Get with some sisters and confess your sins one to another and pray for each other so that you may be healed!

IV. The Principle of Developing Higher Love:

Matthew 6:19 – 21 NLT: *“Don't store up treasures here on earth, where they can be eaten by moths and get rusty and where thieves break in and steal. Store you're your treasures in heaven, where they will never become moth eaten or rusty, and where they will be safe from thieves. Wherever your treasure is, there your heart and thoughts will also be.”*

Matthew 6:33 NLT *“He will give you all you need from day to day if you live for him and make the kingdom of God your primary concern.”*

What I want to try to leave us with today is the awesome principle of higher love. I don't think being made to feel guilty for looking at things or reading things we shouldn't, will serve as a positive reinforcement to never look at or read garbage again. If it did I don't think we would have the porn problem in the church that we have! I think the real issue is **to embrace and to develop the internal principle of Loving God with all my heart, soul, mind, will, and body.**

Deeply desire to **Know His will regarding every person I meet in life!** The Lord has made it clear to us in the Scriptures and we have them available to us to read any time we want to do so.

The Scriptures say that a healthy love life is “one man and one woman for a lifetime,” and teach us to have eyes and hearts only for “the mate of your youth.” It is God’s will that I treat my spouse with the respect, dignity, and honor of having promised herself to me for a lifetime. It is God’s will that men treat women as their sisters and women treat men as their brothers.

Deeply desiring to **Fix my Eyes on Jesus as my first love, my first affection!** Hebrews 12:1b, 2
“Therefore, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Conclusion:

“Choosing to Be Part of a Counter-Culture Kingdom!”

Matthew 6:19 – 21 and 32b, 33

Introduction:

Our topic is the central theme of Scripture: God’s desire to **K**_____ us and be **K**_____ by us in a deeply personal way!

Walking with God in an experience of salvation by faith is a **M**_____ of His grace, because of what Jesus has done for us all.

Our topic today is the **R**_____ of our spiritual **P**_____ for Jesus

Being renewed in our spiritual life is when God works anew in our heart and soul. David expressed it this way in Psalm 23:2, 3. Renewal is about our restoration as God draws us away from the values of this world, and draws us to **D**_____ **S**_____ to His will and ways for us!

The Lord longs for us to give Him absolute control over the **C**_____ we make in our will, to be willing to be **T**_____ by His Spirit.

The Lord God reveals Himself in Scripture as a **C**_____ **F**_____ a holy passionate love for us. Hebrews 12:28, 29. He desires to be our first love, Mark 12:30, 31a.

The role of the Holy Spirit dwelling in my life is to produce three things in each one of our lives. Paul wrote about our responsibility to cooperate with the Holy Spirit: Galatians 5:25; I Thessalonians 5:19.

I. Knowing Jesus Personally – A Very Different Kingdom:

Our Lord Jesus came to earth to establish a radically **D**_____ **K**_____ in human hearts, a matter of inner heart change.

The focus of the “Gospel of the Kingdom” is to **D**_____ the power of **S**_____ in the human heart and soul, to deal with our tendency toward sin.

The Lord God looked on our condition and chose to create the plan of salvation; to come to our rescue in Christ Jesus. Romans 3:23; John 3:16

Three of our Gospel writers tell the story of Jesus’ triumphal entry. This is a clear picture of the radical difference between the two kingdoms. Earthly kingdoms and rulers, and the kingdom of God in Christ: 1. What the world calls power God does not call power. God calls **L**_____ **S**_____ power. 2. What the world calls greatness God does not call greatness. God calls **H**_____ **L**_____ greatness. 3. Jesus was sent a clear message:

Honor and glory N_____ B_____ to people! 4. Earthly leaders gloated over Jerusalem, but Jesus W_____ over what He saw there!

Jesus came to earth to establish a kingdom that is N____ of this W____! Jesus before Pontius Pilate, John 18:36. His kingdom is counter-culture!

II. The Eyes and the Inner World: Luke 11:34 – 36

The eyes as the “lamp of the body” represent how we S_____ or how we F_____ what we see, events, things, people, and issues.

Our eyes reflect our H_____ D_____: What we long for on the inside will taint what we look for. When we come to know Jesus, His presence changes the way we see things and process information.

G_____ E_____ are focused on the kingdom of God ... B_____ E_____ are focused on something outward to bring us inner satisfaction:

1. The outward pull of the W_____ A_____
2. The outward pull of the M_____
3. The outward pull of the S_____ ... I John 2:15 – 17

III. The World’s Preoccupation with Sinful, Sexual Living Jn. 15:18 – 21

Jesus’ words are so applicable to our culture here in North America! The Lord spoke to His people about the evils of living in sinful, sexual, self-interest. ... Habakkuk 2: 12 – 14, 15, 16a

The Word of the Lord is clear about godly sexual expression ...

Our culture’s value is the right to express your self-interest, in what the Bible calls sinful lust based in self-interest. Lustful expression of our self-interest brings forth fruit ... unplanned pregnancy ... unwanted pregnancy ... rape and abuse ... sex-trafficking of children and youth...

Men’s eyes ...

Women’s eyes ...

IV. Developing the Principle of Higher Love: Matthew 6:19 – 21 and 33

Let’s embrace and develop the inner principle of loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, will, and body and love others as we love ourselves ...

Let’s fix our eyes of our heart on Jesus ... Hebrews 12:1b, 2

Discussion Starter Questions for Home Groups

1. What are some of the ways you have personally experienced the Lord working in your heart and soul to restore and renew you?
2. What are some positive fruit we experience in our lives when we learn to walk with the Lord Spirit of God in deep surrender of our will to His will for our lives?
3. Why do we need the Spirit of God to produce the fruit of His presence living in us? What is our responsibility to cultivate and sow in our heart, soul, and mind?
4. If someone asked you about the difference the presence of the Lord Jesus in your life has made, what would you say to them? What are some key ways we are different from those who adopt the values of our culture?
5. Have you ever thought of the Biblical truth that our inner desires of our hearts or what we truly long for we will look for and see?
6. Why does the Lord want His people to know what “good eyes” and what “bad eyes” are? What are some key differences between the two ways of “seeing?”
7. How do you, your spouse, and your family seek to cultivate having kingdom eyes, seeking to enable every person in your household to see the value in confronting our sinful self-interest?
8. Read together aloud Matthew 6:21 – 34 and discuss insights you have regarding the key differences between seeking this world’s values and seeking first the kingdom of God.
9. Read together aloud Colossians 3:1 - 17 and discuss insights you have about things we are called to focus on in life.
10. How have you been renewed in the very recent past or at this present time? Do the people you love know you are seeking God in deep and personal ways, to live out the values of His kingdom here on earth? How do they know?