

Abiding Life Leads to Loving the Father

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Date: 06 May 2018

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[0 : 00] Good morning.

It is a pleasure to be with you this morning. And I know that we need to get to God's Word, but before we do, I wanted to share something a little more personal with you.

You might have noticed in the calendar this month that we have an anniversary. It's our 26th anniversary, and my wife got me something.

It's a moose. Moose are my favorite animals, if you can't tell from there. His name is Slody, and I don't know if you can tell, but he's really adorable.

You know, he's kind of got that little head thing going where your dog, you know, does that, and it's just really cute. He's got this beard. Can you guys see the beard from back there? It's really cute, and the antlers, and, you know, just everything about him is really nice.

[1 : 10] I really like him a lot. And thank goodness Amazon brings things early, so she gave them to me early, and we've kind of been hanging out a lot ever since then.

Matter of fact, I get up, and we, like, eat breakfast together before I go to work. And then at lunch, I go home, we eat lunch together, and we'll, like, hang out, and we'll play some games and stuff.

And in the evening, we eat dinner, and then he sits with me in my chair, and we watch TV. He actually, he's even, he's been sleeping with me, and that's been going well.

But the truth is, in the beginning, you know, Brenda kept, like, rolling over and, like, squashing his antlers, and that wasn't very cool. But she agreed that she could sleep in Josiah's room, and now Slody has a lot more space.

And it really is nice. We were going to go out this Wednesday. This Wednesday is when our anniversary actually is. And I was saying, you know, sweetheart, why don't we, why don't we just maybe stay home and spend some time with Slody?

[2 : 14] And she was okay with that, because, you know, she understands, you know, for me to like Slody is to appreciate her love for me. And so I just, I really like him.

And actually, I got him a little velvet-lined box, and I keep him in it whenever I'm not there, because I don't want anything to happen to him. And I actually, I asked her if she would, like, fluff him every hour so that his stuffing wouldn't settle.

She thought that was a little too much. So we agreed on every two hours. You know, I know it probably sounds like this is a little extreme, but I just, you guys don't understand how Slody makes me feel.

I mean, whenever I don't feel good, I'm kind of anxious, kind of like preaching this morning. I kind of like just sort of hold him, and I feel, you know, peace, and the anxiety kind of melts away.

And, you know, when I'm frustrated or, you know, when I'm scared, just, you know, he just really helps me feel better. And he's really a great listener. And when we talk, he, like, never interrupts.

[3 : 15] And it's like he really understands me. If you could see his face, you would know that feeling. And so, you know, really, I just, it feels great.

Even when I take him out, you know, when I take him out with me places, I'm kind of, it kind of like gives me this sense of pride, you know, that my wife loves me so much that she gave me Slody, you know.

And, okay, I guess, let me just be honest. I'll confess to you. There was this time we were at Walmart together, and I saw this lady, and she was buying a really giant stuffed moose. And I kind of was like, if my wife really loved me, you know.

But then I thought, you know what, there's always my 30th anniversary, right? And so I was okay with that. But a friend of ours kind of started to, they didn't directly say this, okay, but they implied that maybe things are a little too intense with Slody.

There were some questions about, am I spending as much time with my family now that I have Slody? And they were asking about whether things with Brenda and I are as good, or, you know, if really everything that I'm worried about or stressed about kind of all comes back to Slody.

[4 : 24] And it kind of offended me a little bit. It hurt my feelings just, okay, so I was vexed. I was really, I was vexed by it. Because that's like attacking Slody, and attacking Slody is like attacking my relationship with my wife.

And so it really kind of upset me, and I had to, like, talk to him. And you guys understand if, well, if you had a Slody, you would know how that feels, right? As a matter of fact, just talking about it makes me so anxious that I think probably we should just go ahead and pray.

I'm just going to set him right in here. There's a Slody shelf you guys probably didn't know. So let's pray. Heavenly Father, we come to you, and we ask that you would give us eyes to see the truth about our own absurdity, that you would open our hearts to see our own foolishness before you, and that in that we would find hope, we would find forgiveness, we would find intimacy with you. Whereby your Spirit direct our hearts and minds, show us our sin, and show us your glory. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Okay, so I admit, I know, it's a little absurd. And if you don't really understand the parable of Slody yet, I hope by the time we're done that it will make more sense to you.

[6 : 03] This morning we are in 1 John chapter 2. If you want to turn there, 1 John chapter 2, and we're really going to cover verses 12 through 17, but we're going to hop and skip around through it.

So if you would, we're going to actually start in 1 John chapter 2 with verses 15 and 16. 1 John chapter 2, verses 15 and 16.

And if you would follow along as I read, 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.

For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world. The first truth that we're going to look at this morning is that loving the world will steal away your abiding love for the Father.

Loving the world will steal away your abiding love for the Father. I think that if you read that, probably like me, it maybe is a little unsettling to you.

[7 : 22] If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. That's a big warning. That's pretty challenging. I hope it causes you to stop and reflect on your own life as it has me for the weeks as I've been reading through this and pondering it.

If you love the world, the love of the Father is not in you. And it's not like we can just look at our lives, the heart switch per se.

You know, we can open up our heart switch and check it out. Is it on loving the world or on loving the Father? That would be so easy, right? But the truth is, loving the world is more like a leech or a tick that subtly attaches itself to you and subtly begins to suck the love of the Father out of you.

And so I hope when you read that verse that you feel challenged to ask yourself, am I loving the world? And what does loving the world look like? Or maybe in other words, what's your slody? Or if you didn't notice, slody is just idols spelled backwards. What are your idols?

[8 : 34] What are the things in your life? And fortunately, John gives us verse 16. For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world.

Now, I think we would probably all be in agreement on all of the high profile sins, right? I think, you know, most of us in this room could be in agreement murder is wrong.

That's definitely worldly. We shouldn't do that. That adultery is wrong, pornography is wrong, getting drunk is wrong. You know, all the high profile sins, I'm guessing we're probably all in agreement on, okay?

That if you do those things, that definitely is going to steal away your love for the Father. There's a problem. But I don't want to stop there. I want to push in a little deeper. I want to push in a little deeper and consider some things that are not always sinful, but can easily become idols.

Okay? Now, I'm going to just give you a list, and we're going to move through it a little quickly. And you'll notice there's a little space here on your bulletin that says, things I need to beware of.

[9 : 45] If something stands out to you from my list, just jot it down in that space, okay? So, desires of the flesh. Some things that came to mind for desires of the flesh.

First, some relational things. Maybe physical intimacy with someone. Emotional intimacy with someone. Seeking the approvals of others. Attention of others.

Trying to find your security in someone else. Or your comfort in someone else. Trying to have power or control over other people. Now, those things aren't necessarily wrong in and of themselves.

But easily, subtly, they can become things that we're no longer obeying God about, but that we have moved into loving the world. Okay? Some other things. Physical pursuits.

How about things like your job? Your career? Maybe exercise. Maybe recreation. Maybe your hobbies. How about sleeping? Maybe eating or drinking.

[10:44] Those things are not wrong in and of themselves. But so easily become idols in our lives. And before we know it, we're loving the world instead of loving the Father.

How about more passive pursuits? Watching television. Movies. Books. Music. Maybe social media.

And all of that entails. Facebook. Instagram. Pinterest. And whatever else that I don't even know about. YouTube. YouTube. Playing video games. You know, the kind of things that we do to kind of check out mentally.

You know, again, those things don't have to be wrong in and of themselves. They may be, depending on what you're reading or what you're watching. They might be blatantly sinful. But even those things that are not.

How subtly they work into our lives. Until we're loving the world instead of loving the Father. How about desire of the eyes? These are things that kind of create a longing in us.

[11:43] You know, we see something that somebody else has or that the world offers us. And pretty soon we find ourselves longing after those things. Maybe better things like houses, furniture, clothes.

Maybe cars, boats, sports equipment, computers, cell phones, technology, tools. Everybody needs the iPhone 97. Right?

Okay. What about relationships? Even in relationships, we can be turned to a point of desiring through our eyes. We see certain kinds of friends, certain types of people, and we wish they were our friends.

You know, we look at other people's spouses and we wish, man, my spouse should treat me like that. Or I wish my spouse looked that way. Right? Better relationships. How about better opportunities?

Maybe jobs. We wish we had a better job. Maybe we had a better position at our job. Better salary. Maybe something that's a better security with our savings account, a higher amount in the bank.

[12:48] Something that we could feel good about. Maybe having a better vacation. Especially all of you people that are going to Florida, that kind of gives me some issues. You know. All of these things are things that we look at and we desire in our own lives that we don't have.

Even the issue of pride of life. Being aware of the pride of life. And isn't it funny? We're like this. We can both be discontent with what we have and still prideful about what we have at the same time.

We wish we had a new car. Especially that one that has a really cool commercial right now.

Anyway. But, you know, even in that we look down on people that don't have what we have. We wish they had a better job, but we're prideful about our own jobs.

You know, we're prideful about the things that we have obtained. The desires of the flesh or the desires of the eyes. And we can easily begin to take security in those things.

To find comfort in those things. To find our value, our identity in those things. Those achievements. And so, the pride of life. So, what's your slowty?

[13:50] But as I was thinking about this, I got a little more concerned. And thought, let's push in a little farther.

What about our families? Can our parents? Maybe our children? Maybe our spouses? Or our desire for a spouse?

Can that easily change from being something that God has called us to? To being something that we are worshipping? That our love is directed to?

That soon, before we know it, we're no longer loving the Father in obedience in those areas. But it's moved to a loving of the world. And we've set up those things as idols. What about relationships even in the church?

Is it easy for us to begin to connect with certain people in the church? To have certain cliques? Or be looking forward to a certain small group? Or a certain leader?

[14:47] And those become the motivational factors in why we're going to church. Or why we're involved in things at church. Again, things that we're called to do. But so subtly become idols in our lives.

What about this? This is even worse. What about our ministries? Our areas of service? The things that God has gifted us to do. How easily is it that we can move from serving and obeying God's call in our life to those ministries and those areas actually becoming idols?

Where they're the focus of our attention. The focus of our love. And we set aside even the other things God calls us to do. Now, you might think that that's stretching it a little.

But I began to work through scripture and find how often that's the case. I'm only going to give you a couple examples, okay? Just a couple. But you'll see it's there. One example, King Saul.

Okay, King Saul anointed by God to be king, right? But then, you know, you remember he disobeys. And Samuel goes to him and says, God has torn the kingdom from you.

[15:49] And I don't know if you know the story, but Saul doesn't go, oh, well, if God doesn't want me to be king anymore, I'll just step down. No, he reigns as king for another 30 years after that until God kills him, right?

What about the Pharisees? Pharisees, diligent in their study of scripture. Passionate about the things of God. To the point that they were idols in their life and they didn't even recognize Christ. What about Ananias and Sapphira, right? Trying to give to the church, the young church, give things. They sold their property. They were going to give some to the Lord, but their hearts weren't right.

And if we look in scripture, we see there are other examples where we think we could be doing what God's called us to do, only to find out that it's become an idol in our lives.

So, consider Proverbs 14, 12. You probably know this. But it says, there's a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

[16:56] And so, if we're called to look at our own lives and to be careful, to be cautious that we're not loving the world and the things in the world, but that we're loving the Father, this is a vitally important question for us to think about.

It's so vital that I'm just going to stop for a second. I'm going to pray. And I want you just to open your heart and mind to whatever the Holy Spirit might tell you that needs to be on this list of things that you need to be aware of.

What are some idols now or maybe some things that potentially could be idols in your life? And just make mental note or write it down if you're not worried your friend next to you is going to read your list, okay?

Just make note of those things, okay? Let's pray and just prayerfully consider that. Father, we come to you and we acknowledge the fact that our hearts are inclined towards idolatry.

Lord, we come to you and we ask that even in the good, Lord, even in the good that you give us, we are tempted to set our heart on those things. Lord, I ask that your Spirit would reveal to us anything that is keeping us from loving you as we should.

[18:02] That even now, you would bring it to our awareness. That you would use your word to bring us to conviction. That we could begin to set those things aside and love you as we should.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen. Well, I hope there are at least a few things that have come to mind as areas of concern.

But let's look at the good news, okay? We're going to look above where we are in 1 John 2. We're going to look at verses 12 through 14. 12 through 14.

And you can follow along as I read that. It says, I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his namesake. I'm writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.

I'm writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.

[19:06] 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. Now let me start by just saying a couple things.

If you have any questions from those verses. Like, why are they laid out this way? Why does John repeat himself? Who are the children? The fathers, the young men. Why is it in that order? I want to say two things to that.

One, you are not alone. Everyone who reads that has those kind of questions. Number two, I'm not going to answer any of them. Okay? And the reason is this.

Because it would be easy for us to get caught up in the theories and miss the vital truths that are here. Because I think as we look into this, if we go ahead and summarize them. And that's what I'm going to do.

I'm going to summarize and put the children together, the fathers together, the young men together. And give you three truths that should fuel an abiding love. Okay? Three truths here that should fuel an abiding love for the father.

[20 : 03] And I think it's placed here by John for two reasons. One, if you remember last week, or if you look just above this in the book of 1 John, the point is we're called to love our brothers.

And if we don't love our brothers, we're walking in darkness. And so these verses are given to us, I think, as a power, an empowering for us to love our brothers.

And it's also given to us to enable us to turn away from loving the world. So as we look at these three truths, that is the power they should have in our lives.

The first truth. Through Jesus, your sins have been forgiven and you have been adopted into God's family. Through Jesus, your sins have been forgiven and you have been adopted into God's family. Number two. You are intimately aware of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. You are intimately aware of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

[21 : 09] And number three. You have experienced the power of the abiding word giving you victory over the evil one in your own life.

You've experienced the power of the abiding word giving you victory over the evil one in your own life. Your faith, these three truths should powerfully motivate us to turn away from loving the world. But as you notice from your bulletin, the question that kept coming to my mind as I was studying this and as I was reading this, is why are we not moved by that? How is it that we can so easily get to the point where those truths are so common in our lives as believers that we have no emotional response to them?

You know, that we can hear it, that we can say it, that we can sing it, but in the core of our being, it doesn't move us like it might have at one point. Why are we not moved?

And there are three things that came to mind. The first is maybe we're not saved. I mean, the truth is, if we do not have a personal relationship with Jesus, these truths are not very powerful.

[22 : 37] If we haven't experienced a relationship with Christ where he has forgiven us our sins, where we've become aware of who he is, what he's done, if we're not seeing him work presently in our lives right now, then, of course, there's no response to those things.

And if, by chance, you are here this morning and you're not sure that you have a personal relationship with Jesus, if you've never realized your sinfulness, if you are not aware of what Christ has done on your behalf, then don't leave today without talking to somebody.

You can talk to me or Pastor Andrew or really just grab anybody that's around you. Don't leave without being sure that you are in a personal relationship with Christ.

A second reason that I think we're not as moved by these truths as we should be is that we're not aware of the depth of our sin.

We're not aware of the depth of our sin. I think it's too easy for us to slowly become fixated on behavior modification in our dealing with sin.

[23 : 49] And what I mean by that is this. I think we look and we see ourselves as sinners because we sin. We think the problem is that second glance at an attractive person or an impatient response when we're in our cars driving behind somebody or that we are looking at, you know, the worldly things and we kind of wish we had more things.

And we think that that is our sinfulness. But brothers and sisters, I hope you understand we're not sinners because we sin. We sin because we're sinners.

You know, from the moment we're conceived, the Bible says, every ounce of us is set on hating God. Wow.

That's harsh, isn't it? That we are by nature God haters. That every part of us, as we are born, we come out of the womb looking at God and going, no, I'm not doing it.

Doesn't matter what you say, God, I don't want any part of that. We're God haters. Because we are sinners, we sin. So as soon as there is some rule that we find in Scripture, the hatred for God in us immediately compels us to try and break that rule, whether it's to do something or to not do something.

[25 : 15] That in our core nature, everything about us is against God. Everything. And if we don't understand that, if we think it's just that we're not, you know, sometimes we do the wrong thing.

If we think just maybe if I could just change this one habit, I'd be a pretty good person. If that's our view of ourselves, then these truths won't have any power because we won't understand what Christ has done on our behalf.

You know, it's like the story in Luke. You can turn there if you want, but I'm going to read it to you. It's Luke chapter 7, starting in verse 36. And you'll remember the story.

It's a story where Jesus goes to eat at the home of Simon the Pharisee. And when he gets there, starting in verse 37, it says, Behold, a woman of the city who was a sinner, who was a sinner.

That's nice terminology. When she learned that he was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment. And standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wipe them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.

[26 : 37] Now when the Pharisee, now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.

And Jesus, answering him, said, Simon, I have something to say to you. And Simon, so bold, says, Say it, teacher. And Jesus goes on and says, A certain moneylender had two debtors.

One owed 500 denarii, the other 50. When they could not pay, he canceled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more? Simon answered, The one, I suppose, for whom he canceled the larger debt.

And Jesus said to him, You have judged rightly. Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, Do you see this woman? I entered your house You gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in, she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven.

[27 : 54] For she loved much, but he who is forgiven little loves little. How often are we like that? How often are we like, how often am I like Simon, where we receive Jesus almost with contempt?

I mean, did you hear he says, If this man was a prophet, such contempt for Christ. Or at the very best, how about just his indifference?

He hadn't even shown common courtesy. There was no water to wash his feet, no kiss of welcome, no anointing oil, just indifference. How often are we like that?

You know, how, how often do we just not really care if Jesus is there or not?

And the truth is, should our hearts not be like this woman, overwhelmed with grace?

[29 : 05] If we truly understand our sinfulness, then how much more should we rejoice at the truth that we've been saved and are being saved?

We are forgiven and being forgiven. You know, the third, the third possibility, I think, for why we don't find a lot of power in these truths is the topic of the message today.

I think too often that we have allowed, we've allowed an idol in our life and slowly but surely in the most absurd way our love has become fixated on the gift given to us by a gracious God to the point that we don't even care if he's sleeping in another room.

We just want the gift. We don't care about the giver. And as we love the world and as we set our hearts on our idols and as we worry about are we comfortable and are we at peace with ourselves, do we have the things that we need, are we able to just continue even in our Christian activities, we forget the fact that all of these things are gifts from one who is much greater and that our hearts should be set on him to the point that we're always willing to give up everything, everything for him. If you want to deal with the idols in your life, these three truths are the answer. How Jesus has saved you, truly seeing who Jesus is and being aware of what Jesus is doing in your life right now.

[31 : 12] And until those truths permeate our hearts and our minds, I think it very unlikely that we will have the strength to take our idols and set them aside and let our hearts be filled with abiding

love for the Father.

We're going to look at this even more next week. the abiding word in our lives. This morning, as I close in prayer, I would like you to just take another moment to reflect on where is your relationship with Christ?

Is it possible that a slowness has slipped in? even the good things, the right things, the things that are even commands from Christ?

Has it slipped in and taken the focus of your attention and your love? And if so, ask for the grace to embrace the truth of who Christ is and what he's done and what he's doing and set it aside.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you because you are a gracious God. We thank you because you show us mercy even though what we deserve is wrath.

[32 : 38] When we, the ones who should know you best, can so easily treat you with contempt or indifference, and yet your love remains unwavering.

Father, we stand amazed at that kind of grace. Father, please help us not to be like that. Help us to not be like Simon.

Help us to be like the woman who's willing to give everything that longs to be at your feet, that longs to be near you no matter what the cost.

And Father, we know only your spirit can do that in our lives. For truly, our minds are an ongoing forge for idols. Father, please save us, that you would be glorified.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.