

A scenic landscape at sunset or sunrise. The sky is filled with dark, dramatic clouds, some of which are illuminated from below by the setting or rising sun, creating a vibrant orange and red glow. In the background, a range of rugged mountains is visible, with their peaks and ridges also catching the low light of the sun. The foreground features a calm body of water, likely a lake or a wide river, which perfectly reflects the colors of the sky and the silhouettes of the mountains. On the right side of the image, a wooden pier or dock extends into the water, supported by several dark posts. The overall mood is serene and majestic, capturing a moment of natural beauty.

We Have Been
“Seeking the Heart of God”

Ephesians 5:1

*Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly
loved children (NIV)*

*As children copy their fathers, you, as God's
children, are to copy him.*

(J. B. Phillips translation)

A scenic landscape at sunset or sunrise. The sky is filled with dark, dramatic clouds tinged with orange and red. In the background, a range of mountains is visible, with the peaks and ridges catching the low light of the sun, appearing in shades of orange and red. The foreground shows a calm body of water reflecting the colors of the sky and mountains. On the right side, a wooden pier extends into the water, supported by several dark posts. A small, dark silhouette of a person is standing on the pier, looking out towards the mountains. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

Today We Conclude This Series
Seeking the Heart of God
With

“The God Who Calls Us To Imitate Him”

Called To Be Imitators

- *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Ephesians 4:32*
- *Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. Romans 15:7*
- *Your attitude (humility) should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Philippians 2:5*
- *But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 1 Peter 1:15*

The Bar Has Been Raised

- ... *“Love your neighbor as yourself.”* Mark 12:31 (NIV)
- *“Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.* Matthew 7:12 (NLT2)
- *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.* John 13:34 (NIV)

Called To Mature As Disciples

We are not to just treat others the way
we want others to treat us.

We are to treat others as God in Christ
has already treated us.

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To Love As God Loved Us Requires...

1. Showing love as an offering of sacrifice for Christ.
 - This kind of love can be costly; it can hurt intensely.
2. That kind of love must come from the desire of a person's heart.
 - It cannot be demanded, coerced, or bullied.
 - A person can be made to conform but they cannot be made to transform. That requires voluntary submission.

A scenic landscape at sunset or sunrise. The sky is filled with dark, dramatic clouds, some of which are illuminated from below by the setting or rising sun, creating a mix of deep blues, purples, and oranges. In the background, a range of mountains is visible, with some peaks catching the low light. In the foreground, a calm body of water reflects the colors of the sky. A wooden pier or dock extends from the right side into the water, with several vertical posts. The overall mood is serene yet powerful.

Fear, Intimidation And Coercion Will Work
If The Goal Of Discipleship Is Conforming.

If The Goal Of Discipleship Is
To Be Transformed,
Obedience Must Come From The Heart.

Romans 6:15-18 (NLT2)

Well then, since God's grace has set us free from the law, does that mean we can go on sinning? Of course not!

Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living. Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you. Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living.

Called To Confess

James 5:16

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

We Are All Weak And We Are All Strong.

- There are NO Believers, that are weak in every area of righteous living.
- There are NO Believers who are strong in every area of righteous living.
- Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Peter, Paul....
- We all need someone we trust, to whom we can confess and who will pray with and for us.

Called To Love Sinners

Galatians 6:1-3 (NLT2)

Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path.

And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important.

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Shaming Those
Who Struggle With Sin
Is Counterproductive

Our Responsibility

Seek *“the grace and wisdom to condemn sin in such a way that we don’t make it virtually impossible for a sinner to own up to it.”*

We need to remember that, without knowing it, we may be speaking to someone who is crumbling under a load of guilt.”

Jim McGuiggan

Jesus Was Known As A Friend of Sinners, Am I? Are You?

Matthew 11:19 (NIV)

The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say,
'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax
collectors and "sinners."'

But wisdom is proved right by her actions."

Matthew 9:10-13 (NIV)

While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"

On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'

For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

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Called To Honor Repentance And Forgiveness

We Are Tempted To Doubt Repentance...

... When wrongs are repeated.

... When the sin is of a flagrant nature.

... When we don't know the whole story.

... When we don't have a personal or emotional investment in, or commitment to, the person.

Called To Serve As Jesus Served

1 Peter 4:8, 9-11a (NIV)

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins...Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ...

We Are To Serve...

...Who we can.

...Where we can.

...When we can.

...How we can.

...As wisely as we can.

...Without broadcasting it.

Called To Deny Self

Luke 9:23-24 (NLT2)

Then he said to the crowd, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.”

Luke 14:25-27, 28a, 33 (NLT2)

[Jesus said,] “If you want to be my disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple.”

“But don’t begin until you count the cost...”

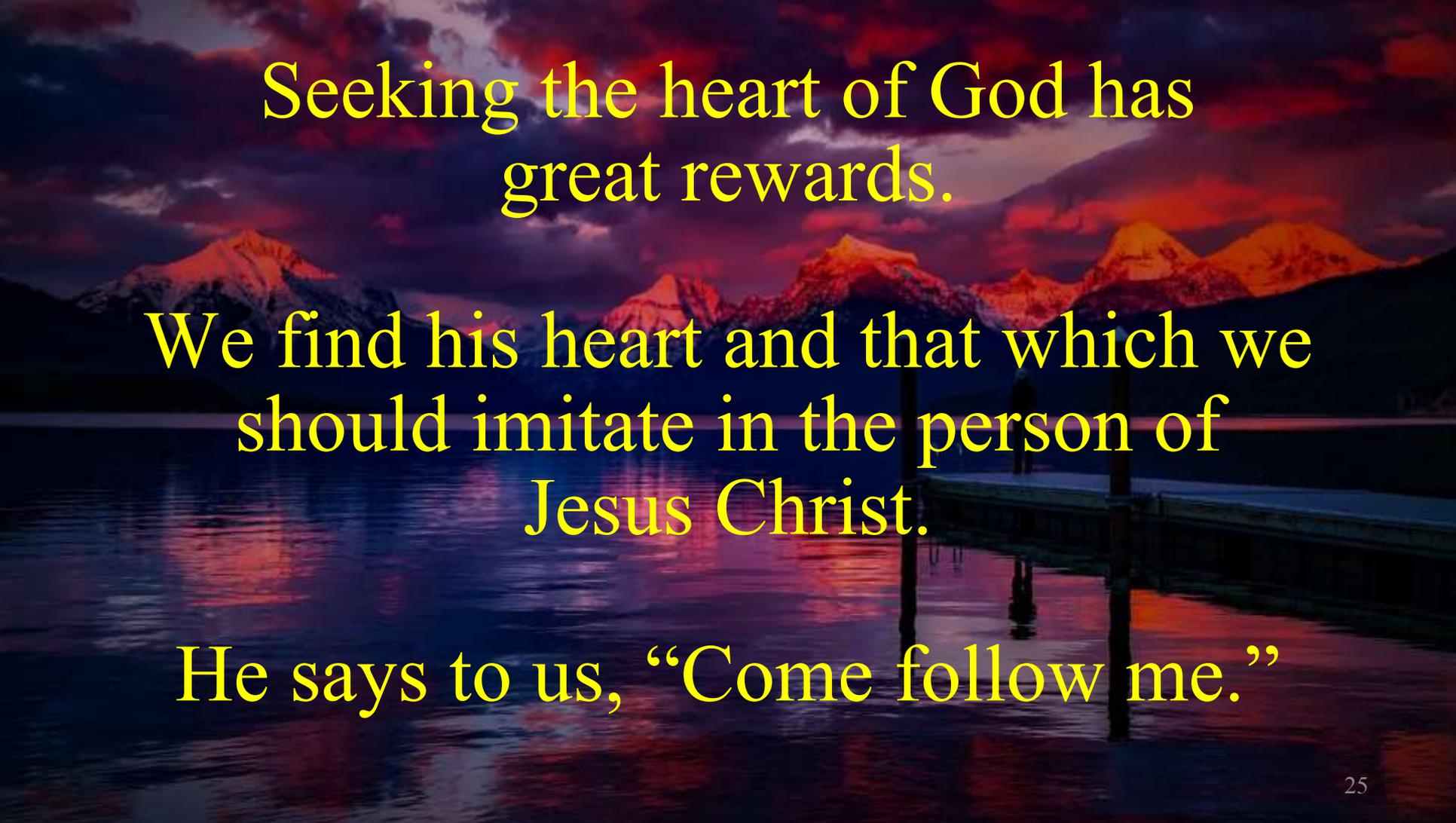
“So you cannot become my disciple without giving up everything you own.”

Self-denial Doesn't Set Well With Us But...

- It is not to hurt us but to help us in achievement.
- No athlete ever achieved greatness without self-denial.
- Counting the cost is not about losing something but about gaining something of greater value.
- Do we lose ourselves by serving or do we lose ourselves by selfishness? Who will be blessed more?
- Deny yourself gossip and gain trusted friends.
- Deny yourself anything unholy and see what you gain.

Luke 18:29-30 (NIV)

"I tell you the truth," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life."



Seeking the heart of God has
great rewards.

We find his heart and that which we
should imitate in the person of
Jesus Christ.

He says to us, “Come follow me.”