A. WHOLEHEARTED DEVOTION

- Jesus defined wisdom as choosing a reliable foundation for our lives. He said the wise man is one who builds his life on the Solid Rock of God and His Word. (Mt 7:24ff)
- We're seeking to "work God's Word into our lives" using biblical tools, techniques and strategies like meditation, prayer and replacing our feelings with what God says.
- The obstacle to a well-built life is half-heartedness. Jesus said the greatest commandment is wholeheartedness: Mk 12:30 NIV-- Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.
- Wholehearted pursuit of Jesus and His Way of Wisdom is costly. He clearly stated the potential costs of this lifestyle: Mt 10:37-39 NIV -- Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. **38** Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. **39** Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.
- This is a challenging teaching! The Lord is calling us to love Him first, to love Him more than we love our families and even our own lives.
- He's not saying to disobey His command to love our families, but to understand that human love can be idolatrous, self-serving, and used as an excuse to avoid His call:
  1. Idolatrous
     - Families are a gift from God intended to point us to the love of the Father. Instead, they can become our ultimate value and take first place in our hearts.
     - "If you make your family your idol, you will never love them in a healthy way. You will put demands on them that they cannot possibly meet, and you will likely harm them." (Tim Keller)
     - We put undue pressure on our family members when they are too important to us. They become gods in our lives that can never fully meet our expectations.
  2. Self-serving
     - When we need our families to need us, we micromanage, rescue, and violate boundaries. Our hearts look to them for meaning and purpose instead of God.
     - Our true identities as disciples of Christ and children of God can become lost when our identities become wife, mother, daughter, or member of the family.
     - We sometimes make family members extensions of our own selves, living our lives through theirs, or rising or falling with their dreams, successes, or failures.
  3. Excuse
     - When we prioritize family time, activities, and responsibilities over our relationship with Jesus, we cannot follow the Way of Wisdom wholeheartedly.
     - We have chosen them over Him if we fail to follow, speak or identify with God's truth because of the comfort, approval or expectation of our family member.
- God may not require us to give up everything we have to follow Him, but He does ask that we be ready and willing to put Him ahead of anything else in our lives, family included.
- Interestingly, Jesus tells us that loving God the most will result in loving others best: Mk 12:31 NLT -- The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

- LISTENING EXERCISE:
  In which of these ways have you been unwise by not loving God with your whole heart? Choose 1 or 2 that your recognize in your life and journal with Jesus:

  -- Loving my husband, children or other family member more than God:

  -- Putting my hopes and expectations on my people instead of the Lord:

  -- Exerting pressure on my people to come through for me:

  -- Looking to my family to give me the purpose and meaning only God can give:

  -- Finding my identity, success, failure, or dreams in my family:

  -- Making my family a higher priority than my relationship with Jesus:

  -- Compromising truth or obedience because of my family:

  Do you see how putting God and His Word first would enable you to love your family with more purity and power?

- Insights:

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B. WHOLLY SURRENDERED

- *How is it possible to be human and still love the Lord with our whole, undivided hearts?*
- When Jesus asked the rich young ruler to give up everything for God, he walked away, aware that he was incapable of giving up his possessions and family. Jesus said: Matt 19:26 NIV -- With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.
- We need God to make us wholehearted! He has given us everything we need to live out this depth of devotion and wisdom: Ezek 11:19-20 NLT -- I will give them singleness of heart and put a new spirit within them. I will take away their stony, stubborn heart and give them a tender, responsive heart, so they will obey my decrees and regulations. Then they will truly be my people, and I will be their God.
- Holy Spirit lives in us and we can trust Him to show us where our devotion is lacking. He gives us willing hearts as we surrender to His transforming work: Psalm 86:11 NIV -- Teach me your way, LORD, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.
- "No man on earth has this passionate love to the Lord Jesus unless the Holy Ghost has imparted it to him…The only Lover of the Lord Jesus is the Holy Ghost, and He sheds abroad the very love of God in our hearts…He will take your heart, your nerves, your whole personality, and simply make you blaze and glow with devotion to Jesus Christ." (O. Chambers)
- Practically, if we want to be wise and build our lives on the Solid Rock of God's Word and God's love, we must maintain a posture of submission and surrender to Him.
- We can only be wholehearted toward God by surrendering to Him anything in our lives that has become too important to us, more important than He is: Lk 14:33 AMP -- Any of you who does not forsake (renounce, surrender claim to, give up, say good-bye to) all that he has cannot be My disciple.
- Use the "Surrender Worksheet" to help you let go. Red flags include inappropriate responsibility, control, or protection of someone or something in your life.
- God's Word makes it clear that the surrendered heart will find God's ways fitting and good: Rom 12:1-2 ERV – I beg you, brothers and sisters, because of the great mercy God has shown us, offer your lives as a living sacrifice to him—an offering that is only for God and pleasing to him. Considering what he has done, it is only right that you should worship him in this way. **2** Don't change yourselves to be like the people of this world but let God change you inside with a new way of thinking. Then you will be able to understand and accept what God wants for you. You will be able to know what is good and pleasing to him and what is perfect.
- "It's wonderful what miracles God works in wills that are utterly surrendered to Him. He turns hard things into easy and bitter things into sweet. It is not that He puts easy things in the place of the hard, but He actually changes the hard thing into an easy one." (Hannah W. Smith):
- Giving it all to Jesus is a relief: Mt 11:30 -- My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.
- Jesus makes amazing promises to those who choose the Way of Wisdom, who see that wholehearted devotion to God is the only stable foundation for our lives:
  - Matt 19:29 NLT -- Everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or property, for my sake, will receive a hundred times as much in return and will inherit eternal life.
  - Ps 84:10 NLT -- A single day in your courts is better than a thousand anywhere else!
- "All the so-called costs and all the so-called losses — *everything* — are nothing compared to the gains of having Jesus, the greatest treasure." (Piper)
- Insights:

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C. PERSONAL APPLICATION

- ONE THING
  The One Thing that I'd like to take away from today's class and believe God to accomplish in my life is:

- PONDER THE TRUTH
  Which verse or principle stood out to you this week? Write it below taking some time to review it often. Be still in God's presence, alert for new insights. Record them here.

- PROCESSING THE TRUTH
  Prayerfully consider the Listening Exercises from this lesson. Ask the Spirit to guide you into a deeper understanding of the truth and to reveal any specific faith steps He his calling you to take. Write down your insights.

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