

This Heart-Wrecking Revelation Makes You Unshakable in Life's Storms

Life can sneak up on us with shakings that leave us scared stiff, or at the very least, overwhelmed. Pressures swell to deafening levels with all the storms and stresses of life. Bills rise. Bodies break. Losses wound. Relationships fail. And on top of these personal shakings, the world is filled with trouble, with more instability than ever and a storm on the horizon that Jesus said would only increase as His return draws near (John 16:33, Matt. 24:3–14).

Do you presently have a storm you're facing? Do you find yourself in the midst of a shaking that is forcing desperate questions? *How do I hold on? Can I bear another blow? Will I make it through?*

The Lord has an answer for us in these anxious times, and it may surprise us. He wants to stabilize us in every storm by first undoing us at the heart level with His beauty and with His love.

The most unshakable people alive are those that have been most wrecked by Jesus—those who have been most undone by His love and most riveted by His beauty. Gut-level circumstances must be answered with gut-level revelation of Jesus. We will only be immovable when we have first been moved deeply by Him.

Wrecked by Love

In Ephesians 3:16–19, Paul prayed for a strengthening with might in the inner man—a rooting and grounding in the love of Christ that gives strength to comprehend the breadth, length, height and depth of Jesus' love. Paul tied the revelation and experience of the love of Christ to stability of soul. Inward

strength is knit to rooted affections in Christ Jesus. Thus, we cannot exaggerate the power of being overcome by His superior love as the way to becoming steadfast in all the distresses of life.

It is common for us to attempt to be unshakeable before being wrecked by the affections of Christ. Jesus knew that that the order was opposite. Peter—after boasting of his willingness to die for Jesus—denied the Lord three times in a critical moment. Yet, after the scandalous forgiveness and tenderness of Jesus leveled him, he became the rock (John 21:17).

John started as a brash and self-absorbed son of thunder, but he became the apostle of love after he stood before the piercing affection of Jesus, exhibited on the cross. In the wake of that love, he never recovered (John 13:1; 19:25-37). Paul the apostle, though first plotting against the believers of Christ, was encountered by the man Christ Jesus and became a devoted bondservant, so wholly compelled by love for Christ that he counted all else as rubbish in comparison (Phil. 3:8).

The pattern we see in Scripture is clear: first we must get in the way of Jesus' fierce love for us, making our hearts vulnerable to His affection, then we will be strengthened like a rooted tree and a firm foundation—our own love for Him made strong and burning (Eph. 3:16-19; 1 John 4:19).

Heart-Wrecking Revelation

So how do we position ourselves for conquered affections? One of the ways that the Lord wants to do this is as we behold Him as the Bridegroom. For me, nothing has been more revolutionary to my inner life than understanding and experiencing the affection of Jesus the Bridegroom.

When I was 20 years old, I experienced this love in a way that absolutely undid me and I've never recovered. Week after week—for 20 sessions in a row—I sat as a young Bible school student, hearing teachings from the Song of Solomon about the

tender affection of Jesus the Bridegroom. Though I had loved the Lord all my life, this was totally new to me. The idea that the Lord would say over me, "You have ravished My heart, My sister, My bride ... with one glance of your eyes" (Song 4:9, MEV), rattled me to the core. It exposed and disrupted so many things in me—my wrong conclusions about how the Lord felt toward me and my false confidence in my own performance.

I was confronted with a God who delighted in me, who was tender with me in my weakness, and who was moved by my responses to Him. I was undone by how He redeemed me while I was far off and His enemy and by the understanding of His jealousy—of His full intention to take my immature sincerity and bring it forth into shining, holy love for Himself (Eph. 5:27; 1 Thess. 3:13). I could hardly conceive of how He could be so moved by my love for Him, though it was yet immature. "Jesus," I would weep, "how are You so moved by my weak heart?"

The revelation of Jesus the Bridegroom has to be the most heart-wrecking identity of Jesus. It's meddling. It's invasive. It's indelible. Just like the marriage relationship gets into every space, the revelation of the Lord as the Bridegroom gets to parts of us like nothing else. It gets underneath the hard-to-reach areas of fear and shame and condemnation and fills them with the light and truth of the Gospel.

When we consider the cross—the pinnacle moment of God's love demonstrated—as the Bridegroom giving His life in death for a wayward bride, Jew and Gentile, deep places in our hearts get accessed and exposed. When we see ourselves as Gomer and Him as the greater Hosea who gave His life to buy us back from our harlotry, we're pierced to the heart by His holy love and His desire that we would be wholly His. Nothing is so compelling as the revelation of the Lord's heart, calling us back to Himself. As one of my favorite songs voices, the Lord beckons us:

I want your heart. I want it all./Not just a part. I want the whole./I've given up everything—given you all of Me.

Would you open your heart again?/Would you open your heart to Me?/Just look at My nail-pierced hands,

Put yours in My wounded side./I'm asking for all your heart 'cause/I've given you all of Mine.

—I want Your Heart by Jon Thurlow

Vulnerability Becoming Stability

When this love of Christ touched me so deeply, I honestly had no idea it would turn out to be the single most stabilizing revelation of my life—the source I would return to countless times over in moments of pain or trouble. And though I am certain many shakings lie yet ahead, I believe what Corrie Ten Boom assured: “There is no pit so deep that His love is not deeper still.”

Have you made yourself vulnerable to this tenacious love? Have you been overcome by the way He receives and takes personal your love? I believe this is when tears come. The one who is forgiven much loves much and when we begin to receive His love deeply and personally—not just as a truth we give intellectual assent to, but as a lifeline that's laid hold of us, a tenderness pervades our souls (Luke 7:47). An ache to respond to Him with holy abandonment through any adversity we may face grips our hearts.

No matter the storm we find ourselves in, we are to open wide our hearts to Him and to His Word, continually allowing Him access to every space. Wherever we are pierced and cut through by His love—wherever His tender affection has prevailed over our striving, our condemnation, our fears and our resistance to Him—there we will be strong. Wherever His beauty—unlike any other—has ruined us for lesser things, there we will be

steadfast (Psalm 45:2; Song 5:10). Troubles will come. Shakings will sift. Yet the Lord is bringing forth—both today and ultimately—a radiant church, overcome with love for Himself and more than conquerors through Him who loved us (Eph. 5:27; Rom. 8:37; Rev. 19:7)). To be wrecked by the love of Jesus is to be unshakable.

Have you experienced this heart-wrecking love of Jesus? How has it stabilized you? {eoa}

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Keeping Your Heart Open to Holy Spirit After a Discouraging Failed Relationship

It dawned on me like one of those truths you wish was wrong even though you know it's right. "Oh no," I sighed under my breath, the truth sinking in. It was that moment when I realized that my vision to love Jesus with all my heart was at stake. And the threat came where I didn't expect it—from the pain and hurt I felt in one of my friendships.

It was one of those times we face, hurt and disappointment

hanging like heavy weights inside, when pain in a relationship colors everything. And in the middle of the heartache, I did what comes so natural for us all—clambered for a way of escape, a way to self-protect. It was in that anxious clambering that this arrow of understanding struck me, and I knew it was true:

If I don't love well in this relationship—though loving well may be the last thing I want to do—I run the risk of having my heart shut down towards the Lord also.

And in that moment, what may have been somewhat separated before—loving God and loving others—came together in full force. My desire to have an open, tender heart that loved Jesus fully was inextricably tied to my relationships with others and how I walked them out. And unless I fought hard to keep that tenderness and free heart with others, I would sadly wake up one day, years from now, wishing that my heart could move in love and worship for Jesus as it used to, only to find distance and hardness filling the space.

This, to me, was more terrifying than facing and walking out the difficulty of the relationship that now troubled me.

Self-Protection Costs Us Our Hearts

Broken and sinful as we are, hurt and failure in our relationships are inevitable. What we do in these crises of the heart holds no small impact on every other part of our lives. And this is where the labor comes in. When our hearts are hurt by one another, the easy and enticing route is to flee for safety, distance ourselves and put up barriers.

Far more apt are we to self-protect than live with open hearts. We are experts at living guarded and hesitant. One little inkling of rejection and we forge a barrier between ourselves and another. We erect interior walls of self-preservation in split-seconds. We are geniuses at inserting safe distances and space.

Yet if we shut our hearts down towards each other, no matter how justified we feel, we ultimately also shut down our hearts towards the Lord.

If we take the easy road of self-preservation in our relationships, then over time, we will face the most devastating juncture of all: we will no longer be tender and alive in our hearts towards Jesus. Self-protection may make us feel safe, but in the end, it costs us our heart.

And this pattern does not slow down with time, but only increases. The number of years only multiplies the number of disappointments, difficulties and seeming justifications for offense and bitterness, making the heart that has remained tender and escaped the endless opportunities for jadedness, disillusionment and offense one of the rarest finds on earth.

How Does the Heart Stay Open?

How then will we ever reach our dream of living with an open heart, tender and not cynical? How will we love God and one another with open and full hearts? There is only one way forward. It is only by the safety of one prospect—Jesus, the perfect one. The safe Friend who sticks closer than a brother (Prov. 18:24).

He comes to each of us in our boarded-up places—He came to me here—where guards are stern and inner vows have been made. With tender eyes that search and know and a heart that loves and covers, He invites the opening.

Where we say we can't trust again—we've been hurt too many times—He draws near, eyes inviting trust, His very being radiating with the light that reminds that darkness has not once from all eternity been found in Him.

And finding our barred-up heart, our stiff-folded arms and reticent stance, He walks in the midst of the relationship that brought the barring. And He opens wide His arms, saying

in essence, “It’s Me you must trust here.”

We Rest Our Vulnerable Hearts in Him Alone

And we then realize. It won’t be in another that we finally rest our need for safety—our vulnerable hearts—but in Him. We are all sure candidates for failing one another and thus all rank as *unsafe*. And if we wait for lack of failure, we’ll end up shrinking our circles of trusted ones until we’ve no one left to trust.

Our openness toward others ultimately rests its trust in Him. If He is so safe, then we can keep our hearts open and ward off the incremental residues of offense and jadedness. Trusting Him, we open our hearts and believe all things of one another even through disappointments, the undergirding being not the faithfulness of each other but of Him (1 Cor. 13:7). And this becomes the freeing vision in the middle of our fallouts and heartaches with one another.

There is one among us in whom there is no darkness at all. It’s Him we trust (1 John 1:5).

Here—with Him in our midst, safeguarding our vulnerable hearts—we are free to love without fear, without fragmentation, without reservation, even when all the disappointments come. Here our hearts stay open and keep moving forward, abounding in love more and more, tender and without offense until the day we see His face, and love is forever perfected (Phil. 1:9–10). {eoa}

Dana will be one of the featured speakers at Unwavering, our conference focused on strengthening and empowering women of God. Registration for this conference is sold out, but you can still purchase online access through the webstream. Learn more
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