

# LIVE LOVED Part 1

Open with Roy Rogers: Don't Fence Me In - video

Did you know that in the early west cattlemen and cowboys could become millionaires without owning a single acre of land? They could have 10,000 head of cattle or more and graze them in open pastures – on what they called the OPEN RANGE. Land that had no fences, no boundaries, no legal ownership. Many a farmer (sodbuster) or sheep farmer (named tramp shepherders or locusts) have lost their lives trying to build fences across land that cattlemen used for free. Land that was figuratively “flowing with milk and honey” ... tall grasses as far as the eye could see. Land that would sustain 10,000 head of cattle and when those grasses were depleted they would move on to other acreage equally as plentiful.

We hear a lot today about Free-Range husbandry, i.e., raising livestock that can roam freely rather than living in cages (or stalls). Tyson chicken advertises that free-range chickens are happier and healthier because they can engage in natural behaviors which makes their meat more flavorful.

The idea of the Open Range inspired the writer of the song you just heard from Roy Rogers... *Don't Fence Me In...*

I opened with this video and song today because I want to talk to you about how to LIVE LOVED. How to live in the Open Range of God's Great Love. I want to illustrate to you that you are RICH in His Love and can move about freely, at will, and joyfully as you Live Loved by Him. I say move about freely because the last portion of the song went, “I can't look at hobbles, and I can't stand fences.” A hobble is a tool used to keep a horse from moving too fast. It is a strap that they attach to the ankles that causes the horse to take very small steps and keeps them tethered yet with a sense of freedom. I saw a video of a young lady who likes to let her horse graze in a mountain meadow that has no fences. But she hobbles the horse to give it the

sense of “freedom” but yet keep it under very strict control. The Father doesn’t want you to be hobbled. What kind of “life more abundantly” would that be to hobble through it, yet many believers do so, and I hope to give you reasons why they do as we go along here.

A few years ago, I preached a message entitled, YOU ARE SO LOVED, which was a message to impress upon you the *magnificent love extended to us* through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. This message ... LIVE LOVED .. is considerably different in that it’s design, hopefully will inspire you to yearn to live in the fullest awareness of Father’s Love every minute of every day. You will gain a confident assurance that “all is well” between you and God.

Athletes and musicians often talk about being in the “zone”. What do they mean when they say they are in the zone ... *“Being in the zone” refers to a state of **flow**—a mental state of intense focus, complete immersion, and enjoyment in an activity where actions feel automatic and effortless.”*

- state of flow - a rhythm
- total absorption and enjoyment - no distractions
- effortless - every move seems natural (*’77 Cutlass Supreme*)
- loss of self-consciousness - focus is on the task at hand

... there is a zone in our walk with Jesus, and it’s dependent on a few simple things where you truly experience LIVING LOVED. It’s not a formula. This must be organic, it cannot be experienced and explored in self-inflicted stress or pressure. You must be at ease and live in peace. You cannot be hard on yourself and LIVE LOVED. This does require growth, changes, maturation, effort ... Paul says work out your own salvation with fear and trembling... but LIVING LOVED cannot be approached as if it’s toil, labor, striving, grinding, putting your shoulder to the wheel, or slaving away.

And let me say at this point, this is a work in progress in me. I do not in any way, shape or form stand before you as the expert on this. I have not arrived. When I mentioned some months ago that I would hopefully one day bring a message to you on this subject, I was in no

rush to present anything to you. I wanted to experience this, test it, really live it out before I addressed it from this stage, however, I was asked to share what I have thus far, so I am doing this at that request.

Sometime in the first half of 2025 I was thumbing through social media one day and ran across a lady that I had never heard or seen before. Her name is Susie Larson, and she has a talk radio show on Faith Radio in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota. The station is KTIS. You can Google her by just using "Faith Radio, Susie Larson" and you'll find it.

As I listened to her social media post that day, I was drawn to a two-word phrase that she used several times in that talk. Those words were LIVE LOVED, and she was challenging me, the listener, to step into another level of living out my Jesus walk ... to come to a larger place in my relationship with Christ where I truly LIVE (max out the joy of living) every day in confidence, strength, purity, joy, trust, faithfulness, etc... a lifestyle in Christ that's above the norm and common level of most Christian living ... she called me to LIVE LOVED.

PLAY excerpts from Susie Larsen

So I began to think and meditate on this. I even wrote in my journal that I was assuredly going to finish these final years of my life LIVING LOVED. This would be the flag on my flagpole — a banner, if you will that I would work under, play under, fight under, and serve under until the Lord calls me home. I believe LIVING LOVED will be the best days of my life — Living Loved will let me not only finish well but take me beyond whatever spiritual maturity I might think I have at this stage in life.

I began to look for more information on the internet ... who else might be talking about this. I thought perhaps that this was original with Susie Larson, but I now believe that it might have come from the creativity of Max Lucado. — Show the book LIVE LOVED.

Let's look at some scriptures that will be foundational for our examining this topic and provide us with an on ramp to get started.

**John 10:10** The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.

**Lamentations 3:22-24**

*Through* the Lord's mercies we are not consumed,

Because His compassions fail not.

*They are* new every morning;

Great *is* Your faithfulness.

"The Lord *is* my portion," says my soul,

"Therefore I hope in Him!"

**Matt 11:28-30** Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

**1 Peter 1:3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...

**Ephesians 1:15-19** Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.

So what does LIVE LOVED look like?? How could this mean more than anything else we've ever heard about a life submitted to the

Lordship of Jesus Christ and the fulness of His Spirit? Perhaps it won't, perhaps it will to a degree, but it does stir in me a new excitement and purpose for my daily living and adventures as I walk into this phase of my life. And I do not mean to imply this is for old people!!! This is for anyone who wants to have fuller joy, a purer heart, a more tranquil inner man, and find a place of rest in God's grace. A place that shuts down past voices, rules-keeping, performance-based Christianity, accusations of falling short, fear and insecurity that will not leave us alone, selfish ambition, wrong motives ... LIVING LOVED weeds out the garden of your life. And hopefully, over these two messages we'll pull a few weeds and clear out a place for some new fruit to come forth.

LIVING LOVED, to remind you, is living on the *open range* of God's love. **Jesus was not a fenced in guy! He was not hobbled** by false ideas, bad teaching, or by the obligation of man-made rules and expectations. He certainly was obedient to the Father... yes? Jesus fought against the bondage of the Pharisees, but completely obeyed the expectations of His Father. Jesus says to us, "My yoke is easy, my burden is light." LIVING LOVED embraces the "yoke" and "burden" that Jesus places upon us, not what man puts upon us. Jesus invites us, when he says, "come learn of Me"... so let's take time now to learn or re-learn of Him and begin to LIVE LOVED. Come learn of Jesus so that you can max out this blessed life given to you through his gift of salvation.

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I have been keeping a running list of thoughts and ideas that come to me through a myriad of different ways about what it means to LIVE LOVED. Some are reasons why I can and should. Some are things I need to believe or position myself in, in order to flourish in LIVING LOVED. Some are just promises of God made new to me during this time. So, I'm going to just present some of these to you and explain a little about them so you can see what I've been doing. These first two are thoughts and quotes from the LIVE LOVED devotional by M. Lucado.

**Live Loved** by remembering that it's God's miracle of re-birthing that saves me. As an infant is helpless in being born I am so in being born again. "Spiritual rebirthing requires a capable parent, not an able infant." "We don't need the muscle of self, but a miracle of God."

**Living Loved** is based on one simple act: TRUST CHRIST. Max Lucado says "the simplicity troubles many people." We want "to find salvation the old fashioned way: we earn it." Pitch out, throw away, discard any thought of working for my salvation, doing it my way, striving and bearing some burden of my continued growth in Him. *"Everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life (John 3:15) "We regularly trust power we cannot see to do a work we cannot accomplish. Jesus invites us to do the same with him." ~ Max Lucado*

If you have not experienced the new birth, if you have not been, as Peter says, "begotten again" by God, then none of this applies to you. Jesus told Nicodemus, "You must be born again." If you've been pretending and faking it, it's time for you to come clean and admit that. Believe on the completed work of Jesus and you will be saved.

I love the illustration of the birthing of a baby. "Spiritual rebirthing requires a capable parent, not an able infant." It has been good to be reminded that I had nothing significant to do with my rebirth, my salvation. The capable parent did all the hard work. He called me, wooed me, was patient with me. I had some false starts and had some misunderstanding about being saved when I was very young. How these found their way into my head, I do not know...

I had a similar experience in coming to salvation in Christ as John Bunyan. John Bunyan was the Puritan preacher and author of the middle 17th century... famous for writing the book Pilgrim's Progress. Bunyan vacillated profoundly between knowing his lost condition and asking God to save him. He would pray the prayer of faith but continue to trust in his own morality and righteousness becoming even more sure that he was lost and undone. He tried to earn his salvation through good works and was blind to the finished work of

Jesus and the cross. After years of struggle he finally came to the truth and left all of his own works and goodness at the foot of the cross trusting solely in the righteousness of Christ. His story is very similar to mine.

I settled this in my heart sooner in life than John Bunyan did, but I have still had lurking in the shadows a “do it the old fashioned way, you earn it” mentality. This is why I said earlier that LIVING LOVED will set you free from “rules keeping” and “performance-based Christianity”... I have (or let’s say attempted) dumped, jettisoned, thrown overboard and left behind any vestiges of that sort of thinking. I am experiencing more peace and joy because of it. I am not going to allow myself to be controlled by any sense that I’m not good enough, need do better, be more of this or that, not acting this out the right way, or any unbiblical expectations put upon me from past authority - intentional or unintentional. I am accepted in the beloved!! I was accepted by the Lord as I was and He is my sole authority and mentor when it comes to shaping me and molding me into His image. He is the Potter and I am His clay!! It’s His thumbprint I want on my clay, not man’s.

I’m hear to declare to you today that if you want to LIVE LOVED you must cease any and all striving to perform for His favor and blessing. Trust Christ’s work in you. Trust the intensity of it, trust the speed and pace of it. Trust Him to be complete and thorough with His leading and guiding, with His correction and discipline. He is the capable parent. You are not. If you were capable you wouldn’t need Him.

He invites you to rest in the hammock of his smile and pleasure.

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I would like to close this way: In the gospel of John we understand that it is truly John the disciple/apostle who is writing this account. He is an eye-witness of everything that Jesus did as one of the twelve. He is thought to be somewhere between 15 and 20 years old during the days when he walked with Jesus. Many scholars thinking him closer to 15 than to 20. The gospel of John was written about

75-80 years later around 90-100 AD when John was an old man. When John refers to himself in his gospel, he repeatedly uses the same beautiful phrase: **“the disciple whom Jesus loved.”**

He’s writing decades after these events, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, remembering moments that changed his life forever. And each time he writes that phrase, you can almost feel him cherishing the wonder of that relationship.

John refers to himself this way five times:

- **John 13:23** – At the Last Supper, leaning against Jesus.
- **John 19:26** – At the cross, where Jesus entrusts His mother to him.
- **John 20:2** – Running with Peter to the empty tomb.
- **John 21:7** – Recognizing the risen Lord at the Sea of Galilee.
- **John 21:20** – Following behind Jesus and Peter after Jesus speaks to Peter - “Do you love me more than these?”

You don’t say something like that **five times** without a reason.

1. Some might say John believed Jesus loved him more than the others. After all, he was part of that inner circle—Peter, James, and John—who witnessed extraordinary moments like the **Transfiguration** and **Gethsemane**.

2. Others think he was simply being humble, avoiding his own name and referring to himself by his relationship with Jesus.

But I believe there’s a deeper reason.

3. John had discovered his **true identity** in the love of Christ. John was not boasting that he was loved more than anyone else...or that he was the only one Jesus loved... he was simply exulting in the fact that he was loved, loved, loved by Jesus and that was far more important to him than his own name.

When you truly know you are loved like that, the need for recognition begins to fade.

And that's exactly what Jesus wants for you.

He wants you to know that you are loved just as surely as John knew it. He wants your identity to be rooted in that love. Every action, every motive, every expression of your life can be founded in this liberating love of God through Jesus Christ.

That love produces courage, confidence, humility, security—and so much more.

You are called to **LIVE LOVED.**

And it is my prayer that a deeper revelation of that truth settles into your heart, stirring within you a desire to truly explore and experience what it means to **LIVE LOVED.**

# LIVE LOVED Part 2

**"Some Christians have just enough Jesus to make them miserable."**

I was a sophomore in college... around 19 years old. One Sunday afternoon I was walking across the campus to catch a bus ride to Manley Baptist Church in Morristown, TN. The church sent a bus to the campus on Sunday mornings and evenings to transport college students to church. As I was walking across the campus on a beautiful sunny afternoon that thought came searing through my mind. I had heard it somewhere recently and don't recall where or when, but the statement arrested me, convicted me, and forced me to be honest with myself.

**"Some Christians have just enough Jesus to make them miserable."**

I remember the pain of conviction that hit me that day and I found myself admitting, "that's me Lord. I'm not truly happy in my relationship with You." I believe that describes a lot of believers ... people who profess faith in Christ but cannot LIVE LOVED because they are not all-in with Jesus. Revelation 2:4 would label it "leaving their first love." To use a marriage metaphor, the bride has separated from the husband and no longer living with him. Or if they are living together, the relationship is broken; they're not on speaking terms.

They are either playing around with sin, looking back over their shoulder much like Lot's wife did as she was escaping God's judgement on Sodom and Gomorrah... longing for pleasures of the past and not willing to lay it all down for the hope they have in Christ. Perhaps they are letting the cares and burdens of life overwhelm and loom larger than God's presence and power. They are after so many other things such as job/career, position, money, materialism, hedonism (pleasure) that they neglect the Holy Spirit's desire for fellowship with them and frankly, are disrespecting the sacrifice and shed blood of the Savior — that priceless gift that they once treasured.

If this describes you... if you have just enough Jesus to make you miserable, then you are invited to pursue a more fulfilling relationship with Him and LIVE LOVED.

I want to clarify something I said last week, which was “in the open range of God’s love there are no boundaries, no fences.” What I meant by that was no boundaries or fences of rules-keeping, performance-based Christianity, bad religion... things that man would put upon us as believers. You do understand that God has boundaries and rules... but if you look at them through Christ’s words, “Come to me and learn of me, my yoke is easy, my burden is light” then we understand these boundaries are not fencing us in...they aren’t keeping us from LIVING LOVED... they aid us in it.

Jesus taught that there were two basic commandments that we should focus on keeping.

“Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” Matt 22:37-40

All of the entire Law ... not just the 10 Commandments... all 613 laws found in the Torah... the first 5 books of the Bible which were given to Moses on Mt. Sinai. 365 Negative Prohibitions (what not to do) and 248 Positive Commandments (what to do). Try LIVING LOVED and keep all those laws... nope!

Focus on loving the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and your neighbor as yourself ... and you’ll find great freedom to LIVE LOVED.

“But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and frolic like calves from the stall.” Malachai 4:2 NASB

Can you see that Bible itself invites us to LIVE LOVED in the open range of God’s great goodness and kindness?

# SUSTAINABILITY

God encounters are certainly part of a believer's life. These could be your initial salvation, being filled with the Spirit, a personal revival where you find yourself being drawn closer to Jesus. But they aren't the norm for every day life. When reading the scripture we go from chapter to chapter, verse to verse and don't sometimes realize the space between chapters ... there are places in the Bible where there is a span of years between verses. We read of the great characters of the old and new testaments but fail to realize that they had many days of living when God wasn't moving mightily. In other words there are time lapses between extraordinary God-encounters in the scriptures. Example:

Time Lapse: 1–2 Years.

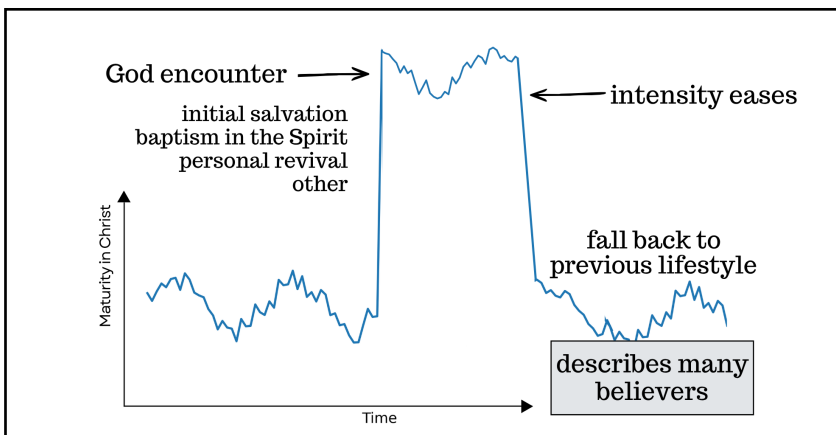
**Acts 5** describes the early days of the apostles in Jerusalem. (Ananias & Sapphira + miracles done by the apostles) **Acts 6** introduces the selection of deacons, leading into Stephen's martyrdom in **Chapter 7**. Many scholars place a gap of one to two years here between chapters 5 & 6.

**Acts 9:25** - Paul escapes from Damascus after his salvation experience by being let down through a window on the outside wall of the city by a rope and a large basket.

**Acts 9:26** - Paul comes to Jerusalem and tries to hook up with the disciples, but they were afraid of him because of his former reputation.

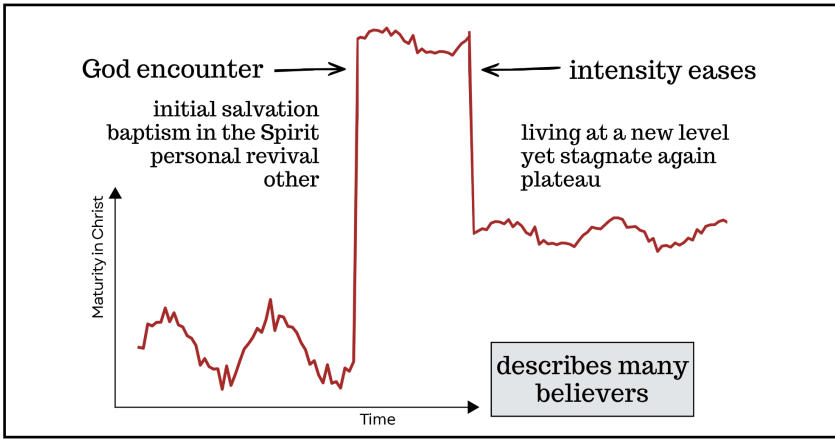
There is a gap of **3 years** between Saul's escape from Damascus and his return to Jerusalem... but you wouldn't know that unless you were familiar with Galatians 1:17-18 which explains that he went to Arabia for three years before coming to Jerusalem.

The great characters of the scriptures did not have God encounters and miracles every day. We read of events that happend in a few days or seasons of their entire lives. How did they sustain their relationship with God in the in-between times? Think of Paul in jail cells during the last years of his life on earth. Imagine the kind of days he might have lived chained to a Roman guard. Yet, Paul was LIVING LOVED in all of it.

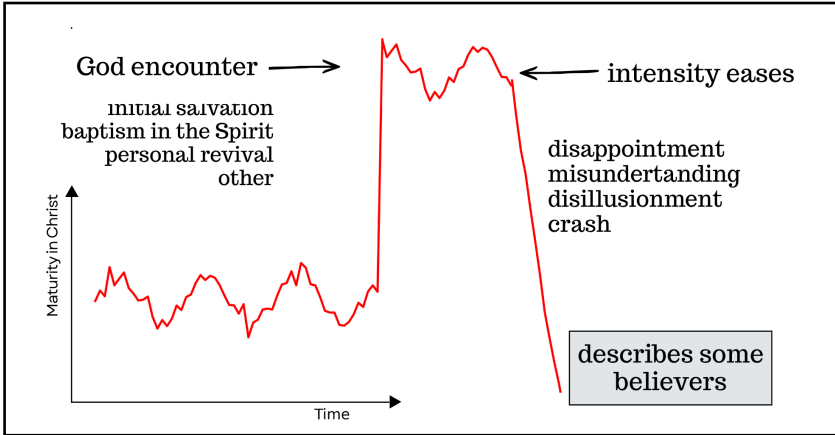


Charts that illustrate some things I have observed over 50 years of ministry when people have encounters with God. These are extraordinary moments in someone's life and they are impacted supernaturally for the purpose of getting them into the Kingdom of God or to empower them for daily living.

These charts are very similar to Jesus' parable of the sower and the seed.



This chart indicates that the God-encounter did have a positive impact but they have returned to a sideways, stagnant leveling off. Perhaps new habits were formed, there was new revelation, but there is no true growth.

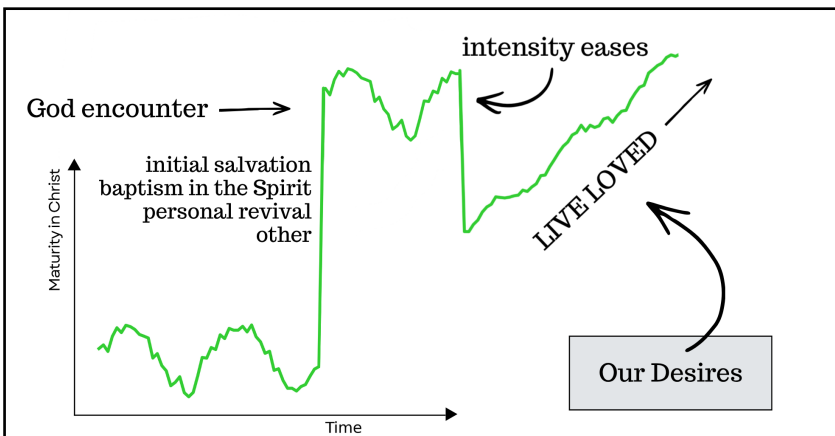


This is the saddest illustration and I have known believers who had disappointments in their understanding of God which caused a crash and burn.

1 example: J.H. and healing

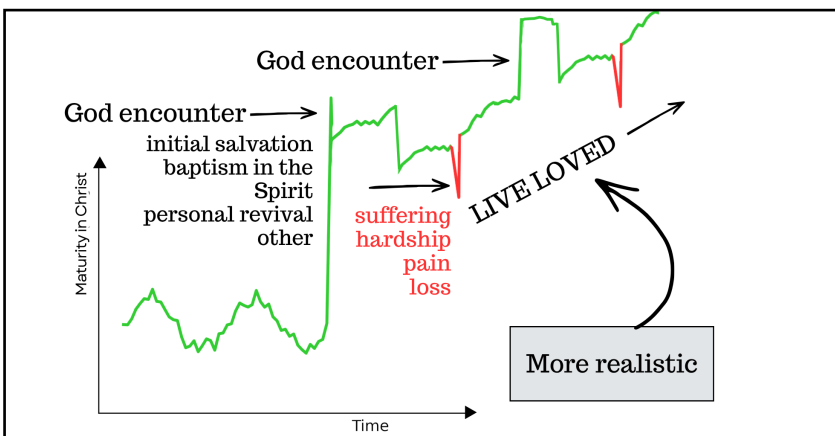
sometimes result of going back to old lifestyle. (dog to its vomit - sow to the mud)

bad teaching or misunderstood teaching. example: my give to get stereo system



I have told many people that I want my walk with God to be "up and to the right"... reasonably consistent maturity, growth, faithfulness... growing in love, etc.

Yet, this is still not an accurate illustration of how to LIVE LOVED. See next graph.



We are probably going to have some suffering along the way, some hardship and loss. It's the way life is, but the Holy Spirit in you does not yield to these things. He pulls you back up into that path of love and maturity. As the Psalmist says, "He is the lifter of my head!" Psalm 3:3

**Capacity:** Susie Larson - video of last week. "When you are abiding in the vine your capacity to handle life's challenges sky rockets... You have the life source flowing through you."

Let's read John 15:4-5

**4** Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

**5** "I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

Abiding in the Vine - Does that sound like LIVING LOVED? **Abiding in Him gives me a greater capacity to LIVE LOVED.** To be a believer in Jesus brings you into the realm of abiding. Jesus abides in you by the Holy Spirit. But we can drift away from the conscious actions or the intentionality of abiding in Him. If we drift away from the deliberate act of abiding in Him, then we forfeit LIVING LOVED and set ourselves up for the sideways drift we see in some of the graphs I just showed you.

**Living Loved** gives me a greater capacity to:

1. handle emotional, mental, & spiritual challenges
2. love deeply - both God and people - esp. people - extend longsuffering, kindness & patience. Someone has said that LIVING LOVED makes you a ***love ambassador!***
3. endure - greater strength to handle trials and tests; bear more, ability to sustain efforts for greater purposes; assist the weak and be an encourager
4. act in confidence when God gives you an assignment - pursue His calling and take risks when necessary
5. expand & grow internally - become a better you; greater capacity for trust, responsibility, & influence

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Where do we begin to direct ourselves toward LIVING LOVED? Focusing on abiding in the vine is a good place to start... and I think a quick look at the teachings of a man by the name of Brother Lawrence would be appropriate.

BROTHER LAWRENCE - *The Practice of the Presence of God*

Brother Lawrence was a 17th century Carmelite layman who lived in a monastery after having a profound spiritual awakening in his 20's. His two tasks in the monastery were, in his younger years, to work in the kitchen and in his later years, make and repair sandals. His wisdom and understanding of how to experience an intimate relationship with God were sought after by many. Through many rich conversations and his written letters the book was compiled by a clergyman after his death in 1691.

*“He does not ask much of us, merely a thought of Him from time to time, a little act of adoration, sometimes to ask for His grace, sometimes to offer Him your sufferings, at other times to thank Him for the graces, past and present, He has bestowed on you, in the midst of your troubles to take solace in Him as often as you can. Lift up your heart to Him during your meals and in company; the least little remembrance will always be the most pleasing to Him. One need not cry out very loudly; He is nearer to us than we think.”* — **Brother Lawrence, The Practice of the Presence of God**

Consistency & Continuity: Brother Lawrence emphasizes that maintaining a constant, loving conversation with God is the most necessary spiritual practice, removing limitations on when and where we commune with God. (praying without ceasing)

Simplicity: He advocates for a "silent and secret" habitual conversation with God rather than relying on complexity, techniques, etc.

Sacredness of the Mundane: Brother Lawrence highlights that finding God does not require great tasks, famously stating, "I turn my little omelet in the pan for the love of God". (Take the daily tasks of life and bring God into it. Make it sacred space, make it sacred time, make it a sacred task.)

Love Over Greatness: He teaches that God values the love behind an action more than the magnitude of the work itself. (This applies as much to daily living as to service we might call Kingdom work.)

Matthew chapter 10 begins with Jesus giving his disciples “authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.” But the chapter ends with these words, “And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that

person will certainly not lose their reward.” Matt 10:42 Do not negate or look down upon small deeds done for the love of Jesus.

Mrs. Hearn - elderly lady who wrote cards and letters to the sick, encouragement to people in need, comfort to people who experienced loss in their family (death)... people she didn't know - give her a name and address and a reason to have a card or letter written and she would do it... I received probably a hand-written letter each month from her when I was in college.

Mrs. Hearn LIVED LOVED! Consistent, continuous, simple, saw her ministry as sacred even though at times perhaps mundane, love was the valued gift, not great works.

Do not allow yourself to get caught up in comparing your gifts and calling to someone else's. The only greatness in God's Kingdom is seen in serving through love. When others are called to exercise prophetic gifts, teaching gifts, healing gifts, building great ministries for the Lord... that's a good thing. If you are called to serve in the kitchen or repair sandals as Brother Lawrence was, refuse to compare yourself to others. Do all for the glory of God and by so doing you will truly LIVE LOVED!

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Last week I opened the sermon with a little song sung by Roy Rogers. “Don't Fence Me In” ... I think that song gives a natural and impactful picture of my current understanding of LIVING LOVED. One of the lines at the end of the song was “I can't look at hobbles and I can't stand fences, don't fence me in.” I showed you some pictures of hobbles. I said last time that God doesn't want us to walk through this life as a believer, as one promised “an abundant life,” yet hobbled. The key thing I said about hobbles... to remind you... a hobble gives the animal (a horse in our case) a sense of freedom but he's actually not free. He's tethered, not as in a chain fastened to a stake or a tree, or his reins tied to a hitching post, but his movement is limited and he's actually being controlled.

Let's look a moment at some things that will hobble our walk with God.

## What are some things that hobble us and keep us from LIVING LOVED?

(randomly collected)

- disregarding God and refusing to accept the forgiveness Christ offers. If that's where you are, there is nothing about this message today that can bring you hope and joy. You must take this first step. It's not difficult to do. Jesus made it simple. But your pride is the barrier that stands in the way.

- fear of disappointing God - seeing God as a harsh judge rather than a loving father; performance-based theology; deep-seated shame; legalistic; never good enough

- brushing Him off when He desires fellowship with you. Ignoring His overtures of affection and love. Do this too many times and He will not come very often.

- you don't really enjoy God - "You have just enough Jesus to make you miserable." Salvation for you is a ticket to heaven and a bypass around hell. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." (Phil 4:4) "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." (Westminster Catechism) "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore". Psalm 16:11

- refusing to heed His voice when He offers you wisdom and counsel is actually disobedience - as you mature in Christ his voice often feels like a whisper or a slight nudge. You must be listening intently and consistently. "My sheep hear my voice..." (John 10:27) You have to cultivate a quiet spirit in order to hear. Then you must act on His wisdom & counsel.

- busyness - this is a deflecting mechanism keeping you from facing the real issues between you and God

- unforgiveness for yourself
  - unforgiveness for others
  - harboring secret sin
- these 3 will rot you from the inside out

- discouragement - some measure of suffering is experienced by all of us... some more than others. For the believer, suffering and pain must bring glory to God. Lift your eyes and attention off of the trials and fix them firmly on Jesus. Repeat as necessary!! "You have turned my mourning into dancing..." Psalm 30:11

- fear & worry - “destructive anxiety subtracts God from the future...” “fear is unwilling to share the heart with happiness.” (both quotes by M. Lucado) LIVING LOVED will require risk-taking. Heightened joy and love in Jesus gives Him the freedom to stretch you beyond your current limitations. Leaps of faith may be required. “Worry gives small problems big shadows.” (Lucado)
- grumbling/complaining - “Amplify gratitude. Mute grumbling.” (Lucado) This is the day the Lord has made. Live in it joyfully. “You must be present to win. Don’t heavy today with yesterday’s regrets or acidize it with tomorrow’s troubles.” (Lucado)

- negative self-talk. It’s a habit learned from childhood. War against it by declaring who you are in Christ. Whatever God says about you is truth. Demand that voices saying otherwise to shut up and leave you alone. Take authority over them. Invite the Holy Spirit to guard and protect your mind and to arouse you when you are mindlessly rehearsing and repeating old destructive mantras.

- “ignorance of mercy” - Max Lucado says, “you don’t understand it or if you do, you think you have reached your limit with God.”

- you were accepted in Christ by grace but you try to please God by works and always seem to fall short. Grace begins the journey and keeps you through the journey until the end of life. Christ’s work is so complete you cannot add anything to it. Be and do out of love for Him, not to gain His favor & blessing.

- Heaven’s wisdom is at your disposal. Making foolish decisions is totally unnecessary. Break the cycle by yielding to the Holy Spirit’s leadership in all decision making. Listen closely. God is leading you.

- You live in what biblical theologians call “a cycle of apostasy” - it’s what the Israelites were famous for... walking in obedience with God, being distracted away from God, living in an apostate lifestyle for a time, hardship comes, then they repent & return to God for a time and the cycle starts all over again.

- You have not yet understood or accepted your rights of sonship -  
The theology of sonship is really about understanding who you are because of Jesus. When someone puts their faith in Christ, they’re not just forgiven and given a clean slate—they’re welcomed into God’s family. That means God isn’t just a distant ruler; He’s Father. And that changes everything. Sonship reminds us that our identity comes before our effort. We don’t work to earn a place in the family—we start from belonging. Jesus is God’s Son by nature (only

begotten), but we become sons and daughters by grace and adoption. The Holy Spirit makes that real in our hearts, giving us the confidence to call Him “Abba, Father.” With that relationship comes both privilege and growth. We share in Christ’s inheritance and His mission, but we also grow through loving correction and spiritual maturity. In the end, sonship isn’t just a doctrine—it’s a secure, transforming relationship with a Father who loves us deeply.

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**LIVING LOVED** encourages and helps me to see every day as a precious gift. I “must be present to win.” I am not **“to heavy today with yesterday’s regrets or acidize it with tomorrow’s troubles.”** *This* is the day the Lord has made.

**LIVE LOVED:** “**Destructive anxiety subtracts God from the future.**” ~ Lucado. Matthew 6:25 AMP “Therefore I tell you, stop being perpetually, uneasy, (anxious and worried) about your life.”

You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. Joel 2:26

Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You, which You have prepared for those who trust in You. Psalm 31:19

This is a more recent issue with me. About 18 months before I retired I would wake in the middle of the night in a literal sweat worried about how I was going to financially survive retirement. I had saved as much money as I could, but my concern was that I wouldn’t be able to retire well, if at all and that I would be pinching pennies, doing work I didn’t want to do, and robbing Peter to pay Paul with my bills. I was having bad dreams and was bombarded with more negative thinking than I would care to admit to you. I would try to give it over to the Lord in faith, but I was getting very little relief.

Perhaps you’ve been where I was or perhaps you’re there now. In the words of Max Lucado, My “destructive anxiety was subtracting God from my future.” I was “acidizing my today with tomorrow’s troubles.” I typically wasn’t a worrier, but this enemy had moved into my mind and was having a hey-day.

Now what I’m about to tell you is why we need Godly friends and wise counselors in our lives. If you don’t have those, you need to ask God to provide that for you. My prayer and accountability partner was getting the brunt of my angst as we would talk about where I was and at one point he tells me that he doesn’t think it will be as bad as I think it will. Honestly, that didn’t help much.

But after some weeks of carrying my burden in his own heart he came to me and encouraged me to see a certain man - a friend of his - who would sit down and talk Susan and me through every piece of final financial planning we needed to do to make retirement happen. He was very kind and knowledgeable and spent probably 2-3 hours with us that first session... and there were a couple more to follow, but after the first session I could see some light piercing through the darkness. The financial counselor provided me with some positive facts that were just a trickle of hope. I'm not sure I can describe what happened after that, but it was if that ray of hope, that ray of light was just what I needed to start trusting again... just trust. It was like I was unchained, like a bird out of the cage, I began to pour my faith to that hope like gasoline on a fire... and it blazed up big in me. I believe God leaned in to my faith and sent us a financial love gift of blessing our way which assisted in almost getting us back to a zero sum financially.

I truly was, in the words of our verse from Joel 2, "eating plenty and satisfied - by faith and Father's blessing." He had truly dealt wondrously with me.

Now, understand this, that this experience happened before I embarked on this LIVE LOVED journey. But as I have pondered on God's faithfulness during these early days of retirement, I find that I am at great peace. I am full of gratitude for God's attention to me and to meet my needs in every way.

You will remember the wonderful relationship young David, the shepherd boy had with King Saul's son, Jonathan. They loved each other with a covenant love. So much so that they promised to take care of each other's children should something happen to one of them.

In 2 Sam 4 we read a short paragraph introducing Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth. His grandfather King Saul and his father Jonathan were killed in a battle when Mephibosheth was age 5. When his nurse heard of their death she panicked and ran for safety with Mephibosheth. In her haste she stumbled and the little guy fell breaking his legs. These never healed correctly and it caused him to be lame in his feet.

Sometime later (recorded in 2 Sam 9), after David became King of Israel he asked a servant (who had been King Saul's chief servant) if there were any of Jonathan's children still living so that he might bless them. The servant told him of Mephibosheth and where he lived. David sent for the young man who entered the court very afraid. David announced to him that he was going to restore all of his grandfather Saul's land to him, have servants work the land, and bless him with the proceeds. And then King David announced to Mephibosheth, "you will eat at the my table like one of the King's sons." (2 Sam 9:11)

Ladies and gentlemen... I am Mephibosheth!!  
The King has invited me to his table and has accepted me as one of the King's sons!

Like Mephibosheth, He has restored to me an inheritance. He is my inheritance... He is my portion. (Lamentations 3:24)

**I'm a Child of the King** - old hymn of my childhood and pre-adult days...

My Father is rich in houses and lands,  
He holdeth the wealth of the world in His hands!  
Of rubies and diamonds, of silver and gold  
His coffers are full, He has riches untold.

I'm a child of the King,  
a child of the King;  
with Jesus my Savior,  
I'm a child of the King.

**This truth causes me to LIVE LOVED!!**

After last week's sermon, Jennifer Taylor (one of our newer members) came to me and showed me a video clip from The Chosen series. She said that the things she heard in that message reminded her of it. Later that day she sent me a YouTube link that had a few more scenes attached to it, saying, that it was a better version of it. I want to close this series by showing you that clip.

The clips are about Matthew the tax collector being called by Jesus to be a disciple. In just a few short moments it reveals how Matthew discovered the secret to LIVING LOVED.

It doesn't mention the phrase LIVE LOVED, but it magnificently shows how we find it!

VIDEO  
Matthew scene from the CHOSEN...

## **LIVE LOVED - thoughts and journal compilation**

Live in an hourly awareness that “He loved me and gave Himself for me.” Gal 2:2 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. **Open range Love!**

We hear a lot today about Free-Range husbandry, i.e., raising chickens (or other livestock) that can roam freely rather than living in cages (or stalls). Free-range chickens are happier and healthier because they can engage in natural behaviors, eat insects, seeds, etc, which makes their meat more flavorful... also, cuts down on need for pesticides and herbicides. Chickens eat seeds, plants, pesky bugs, etc.

**Open Range Importance in Cattle Production:** The essence of open range was the free grazing of cattle on millions of unfenced acres of public land. *It was possible to become wealthy by raising cattle without owning any acreage.* Although most ranchers owned a base operation, some owned millions of acres.

Free range/open range - not fenced in but freedom ... or locked in a cage, which is like a prison... liberated, unchained, unfettered. I live loved on an open range. I can go, come, stay. I can frolic like a calf from the stall. The sun shines, the rains pour. But I'm living on the open range of God's love.

### ***Don't Fence me In lyrics***

Oh, give me land, lots of land under starry skies above  
Don't fence me in  
Let me ride through the wide open country that I love  
Don't fence me in  
Let me be by myself in the ' breeze  
And listen to the murmur of the cottonwood trees  
Send me off forever, but I ask you please  
Don't fence me in

Just turn me loose, let me straddle my old saddle  
Underneath the western skies  
On my Cayuse, let me wander over yonder  
'Til I see the mountains rise

I want to ride to the ridge where the West commences  
And gaze at the moon 'til I lose my senses  
And I can't look at hobbles, and I can't stand fences

Don't fence me in

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kg\\_zurRBHlg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kg_zurRBHlg)

- I am **SO LOVED**. John 3:16 For God so *loved* the world...
- Live Loved because I'm free from any mental shackles of failure(past, present, or future) or shame from sin
- Live Loved... I can take Spirit-led risks because if I'm wrong or mess it up, He is there to cover me and catch me.
- Live Loved, assured of His kindness. Even his kindness led me to repentance (Rom 2:4). "But let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice, and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.— Jeremiah 9:24, NIV I live in His delight!
- Live Loved, assured of His leadership. The Holy Spirit is my advisor, coach. He brings me encouragement when I need it, correction when I need it, direction when I need it.
- Experiencing the infusement of His strength and power for more than daily living ... for extraordinary spiritual encounters as He brings those to pass.
- Living loved gives me courage, for the Battle is the Lord's (I Samuel 17:47) which was said by David as he ran toward Goliath recorded in verse 48!
- Living Loved insists that I speak life to others. <https://youtu.be/ZeBv9r92VQ0>
- Live Loved: **Destructive anxiety subtracts God from the future.** - Max Lucado / "Therefore I tell you, stop being perpetually, uneasy, (anxious and worried) about your life" Matthew 6:25 AMP
- Live Loved because God loves you beyond your sin. He sees the completed you. "For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus." (Idea from Live Loved devo ... p.74)
- Live Loved for your Father provides your needs daily. Israelites and manna in the wilderness. "Give us this day our daily bread." God has stored provisions that are there for me and my house. Psalm 31:19. (Live Loved devo p. 80)
- Living Loved is based on one simple act: TRUST CHRIST. Max Lucado says "the simplicity troubles many people." We want "to find salvation the old fashioned way: we earn it." Pitch out, throw away, discard any thought of working for my salvation, doing it my way, striving and bearing any burden of it. "Everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life (John 3:15) "We regularly trust power we cannot see to do a work we cannot accomplish. Jesus invites us to do the same with him."
- To live loved gives me the privilege of refueling my empty emotional tank at Jesus' feet. I can take my depleted emotional resources and fuel up with Him before I panic, argue, fume, or do serious damage to myself or someone else. Live Loved p. 92.
- Live Loved by living in the counsel of his will. Let God's wise counsel lead us. It will take weight and pressure off of us in decision making. Ephesians 1:11

- Live Loved by remembering that it's God's miracle of re-birthing that saves me. As an infant is helpless in being born I am so in being born again. "Spiritual rebirthing requires a capable parent, not an able infant." "We don't need the muscle of self, but a miracle of God." ~ Max Lucado, p.100.
- Live Loved knowing that the one and only God of the universe has chosen me before the foundation of the world. He has no counterpart or equal. None is like Him... and He wants a relationship with me. All believers have a first-level relationship with Father God. Max Lucado, p.104
- I live loved because Father wants me to seek His counsel on everything I face and decision I make. He wants to supply the counsel of His will in every circumstance. I engage His counsel by praying first. Live Loved, p. 108.
- Living loved helps me realize that every experience in life, whether good or bad is preparing me for an eternal glory. 2 Corinthians 4:17 p.110
- I live loved because God's infinite wisdom (omniscience) and strength (omnipotence) are at work on my behalf. My days are known by Him before I ever live them. He can lead me, protect me, teach me ... all in complete perfection because of His knowledge, discernment, and power.
- I live loved because my worth is in Christ. I do not need to think too highly of myself nor try to impress others. Humility is my attitude and Christ will exalt me or anything I do at His pleasure. Attempt to live in the shadows or at the edge of them rather than the spotlight. I live loved to please Him not impress others or exalt myself.
- Living Loved encourages and helps me to see every day as a precious gift. I must be "present to win." I am not "too heavy today with yesterday's regrets or acidize it with tomorrow's troubles." *This is the day the Lord has made.* p.133 "Worry gives small problems big shadows."
- Jesus expresses His love to me in His written word and by His Spirit. I Live Loved as I spend time reading and meditating on the Word of God which is "living and active". Hebrews 4:12 p.141
- As I live loved I practice strength and courage in the face of opposition. In fact, I expect opposition, but don't anticipate it. Living Loved doesn't insulate me from it. In fact, it actually helps me ignore most of it because I'm aware that Jesus Himself was opposed. Grace grows in me as I spend time with Jesus. p.142
- Living Loved requires me to live all of my life to the glory of God. God expects and demands to be glorified. The heavens were created to declare his glory. Leviticus 10:3 God told Moses "I must be glorified." See p.164
- To live loved means that I am under the authority and security of The Authority of the Universe. He makes the rules and He enforces them. He governs over my life and all those who trust Him with compassion and care. We do not need to be afraid of His authority as it is always just. Our only reason to fear is if we purposefully go against that authority. But why would we? Why break our bond of love?

- I have influence with the Father. Seated at His right hand. I pray and ask out of that closeness. That is a prayer that avails much.
- Living Loved is something you cultivate. It's done with gentleness and ease. But it's also done with time and effort.
- No need to be a vigilante. God assesses accurate judgment; perfect timing and perfect punishment for those doing wrong around me or to me. Jesus did not threaten retaliation at the crucifixion. He placed Himself totally in Father's hands. p.192
- I can live loved because I'm fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:13-18). But when I speak negatively about myself—saying things that belittle who I am, focusing on my flaws, or calling myself unworthy or incapable—I'm actually disagreeing with what God says about me. God's thoughts toward me are as vast as the sand. I am His idea and His creation. Live humbly in that confidence. No need to boast. No need to be motivated by self-promotion. But also no need to think small and disparaging of myself. I have a place in this world. I have a purpose. Take ownership of that and move forward with quiet confidence. (p. 182-183) What opportunities is God offering me right now that I'm reticent to embrace? (see also Isa 43:7)
- "Those who are most fruitful in prayer pray to tune their hearts to the Father's rhythm, and those most frustrated in prayer are those who use it to try to get God tuned to theirs." Wayne Jacobsen
- Idea: after sharing the above statements go through some well known scriptures and have them fill in the blank of key words. To illustrate: 1. God's word is in their heart 2. To cultivate living loved we must remind ourselves of the riches of God's love for us
- My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. John 10:27
- His mercies are new every morning, great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:23
- His kindness leads us to repentance.
- He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Psalm 23:6
- But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8
- "The Lord your God is in your midst,  
a mighty one who will save;  
he will rejoice over you with gladness;  
he will quiet you by his love;  
he will exult over you with loud singing" (Zephaniah 3:17).
- God loves us because he loves us.
- Theologian Henri Nouwen summed it up best when he wrote, "My true spiritual work is to let myself be loved, fully and completely."

- Ignore the world's labels. All I care about is what God says about me. (does Song of Solomon 4:7 NIV apply to me? "You are altogether beautiful... there is no flaw in you." Father sees us through Jesus' righteousness.

Psalm 147:11 - the Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.

Psalm 149:4 - the Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.

Isaiah 62:4-5 - No longer will they call you Deserted,  
or name your land Desolate.  
But you will be called Hephzibah,  
and your land Beulah:  
for the Lord will take delight in you,  
and your land will be married.

**5** As a young man marries a young woman,  
so will your Builder marry you;  
as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride,  
so will your God rejoice over you.

<https://redbudwritersguild.com/learn-to-live-like-youre-loved/>

- I remember my life and lifestyle before salvation for one reason. To be thankful for the work Christ has done in me. To remember and reflect on how far I've come by His grace. "Look at what you were when God called you." 1 Cor 1:26 NCV I am careful not to examine sins and mistakes too closely. I do not hold on to them because they are forgiven. This thought came to me: Some people cremate their loved ones, even their pets. They keep these cremated remains to remind them of the joy that person or pet brought to their lives. When I reflect on my life before Christ, and that is really not often, I want to see cremated remains, not individual sins, wrongs, injustices, brokenness, and the like. It's all been turned to ashes and I can see it in one little collection as such. He truly has turned my ashes to joy.

\*\*page numbers most likely will indicate LIVE LOVED by Max Lucado