

Series: **KING ME!** God's People Get MORE Than They Ask For

October 17, 2010

NINETY-NINE PERCENT IS ONE PERCENT SHORT!

Deuteronomy. 6:4-6; 1 Kings 11:1-13

Speaker: Ken Davis

1. Anyone here ever heard of David Gergen or seen him on CNN as a political analyst? He's written a book that I've been reading at my leisure entitled **Eyewitness to Power: The Essence of Leadership Nixon to Clinton**. Having lived through that era as a US citizen, I thought it might be interesting to know what he had to say. When it came to Bill Clinton, his words shocked me—but didn't surprise me. "To friend and foe, Bill Clinton is a mass of contradictions. He is one of the smartest men ever elected president and has done some of the dumbest things." Years ago, I heard a speaker say, "If you excel in 9 out of 10 areas, it doesn't ultimately matter if the tenth one kills you!"

a. And that would fit the life of Solomon. We talked about him a few weeks ago—that he was truly a world-class guy—a record breaker in just about every area of life. But in the **one** area that counted most—obedience and devotion to the One who gave him all he had, Solomon drifted.

-Solomon started **really** well—heard God's voice, was humble and pliable—and personally saw the Glory of God fill the temple he had built. He felt the Spirit on his life—and wrote three books of the Bible. But the final comment on his life and his leadership is underwhelming to say the least:

As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been...The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. (1 Kings 11:4,9 TNIV)

b. Please understand; this wasn't an unfortunate mistake made by a young, foolish king. Solomon had lived a long time—and he knew what God expected. Right at the front end of one of the best known passage among the Jewish population are these words:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. (Deuteronomy 6:4-6 TNIV)

-Solomon would've been **very** familiar with this passage. Now—just as a kind of intellectual check-point here, which part of a person's heart, soul and strength does the word **all** leave out? Like, would 99% be considered **all**? I'm not a math whiz—but according to my mathematical calculations, 99% is 1% short.

- c. How many of you think that Solomon, wisest man who ever lived, would say, “Oh my word—I **totally missed** that!” Solomon knew better. He knew everything belonged to God. He told people in his book of wisdom that, **the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom**. He wrote, **Trust in the Lord with all your heart; don’t lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight**. He knew that the nation he led, Israel, **belonged** to God—not him—and that their calling was to bless and be a light to the nations. So—**what happened?** How did he get into one of the most degraded forms of idolatry that has ever existed—one that called for the sacrifice of young children?

*Did he begin to believe his own press—that he was the wisest person who had ever lived?

*Did he get so distracted by life, by making money, by all stuff going on in his life that he just didn’t care?

*Did he get so caught up in the current of his culture and the belief systems of his wives—that he went with the flow to save time and energy?

-If I were to have to take a guess—judging by what I’ve seen in me and others—I’d say, **all of the above!**

2. The part of this passage that shakes me up is the part that tells us that God was **angry** that Solomon was not **fully devoted**. Wouldn’t God just be happy that Solomon’s heart was **mostly** devoted? Say, 99% there? Well, let’s talk about 99% for a few minutes. A centimeter--99% of a meter—isn’t much, is it? A third of an inch. If you’re the direction of your wheels is off 1%--drive a kilometer, and you’re into the guardrails.

-How many of you would eat pork that was 99% worm-free? If your child gets sick and almost dies from e coli bacterial poisoning—would you be okay with a water filtering plant that said, “Well, at least our water was 99.9% contamination free!”

-I’ve done a lot of weddings over the past few weeks—including one yesterday. I can guarantee you that if either the bride or the groom said, when it came time for the vows, “Honey, I’ll be **99%** faithful to you! If I make love 100 times a year, 99 of them will be with you! I’ll keep 99% of my promises and tell the truth 99% of the time...”
They’d never make down the aisle alive, let alone dance at the reception!

-Solomon was an **amazing, world-class guy**—but his epitaph read:

...His heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been (1 Kings 11:4b TNIV)

Solomon started the 1% drift—or whatever it was from being **fully devoted to the Lord**—and the whole nation, 400 years later, was in the ditch. God wanted the nations to know who He was by watching **them**. They got so far off—and were doing so much damage to His Mission--that God had no choice except to haul them off into exile in Babylon to bring them back to Himself.

-God takes the influence He's entrusted to us **very** seriously. Solomon's less-than-fully-devoted heart had a **devastating** effect on the history of the Israelite nation. Ninety-nine percent is **one percent short**.

3. I'm guessing that Jesus wouldn't be real impressed with the 99% thing either. He quoted this same passage about loving God with **everything**—with **all** your heart, **all** your soul, **all** your strength and **all** your mind. In fact, he said that this command was **the** most important command of all—followed closely by **love your neighbor as yourself**. So, how have **we** His people been doing with this?

-See, to belong to Jesus, to be his **Church**—His gathered ones—means that this mission that Solomon—and ultimately, Israel compromised has now passed to us. **We** are the salt of the earth. **We** are the light of the world. **We** have been called to **be** the Good News to all nations—to **take** the Good News to all nations. And the most powerful force in the universe, the Holy Spirit, has taken up residence inside us to give us supernatural power to love, to show patience, to be generous and self-sacrificing, and to live with **courage!**

-In some ways you can evaluate how God's people have done by asking people in the GTA, "So, what do you think of the Christian church?" In our world—the answer to that question is more likely to be negative than positive. How did that happen to a movement that astounded the world with its beauty and love 2000 years ago? A movement that people would become a part of—even if it meant being executed on a cross or thrown to wild animals in the Roman Coliseums?

- a. When Jesus' followers first received the Spirit, the love, compassion and community that poured from their lives made them virtually irresistible. You don't find them going around carrying signs that said, **Turn or burn! Forsake or bake!** Their message was a message of repentance—but it was **Good News!** "Jesus is Lord, not Caesar—and He went to a cross and rose from the dead to bring you back and make all things new and give meaning to every life! Think you might be interested?"

-People responded by the **thousands!** Suddenly, compassion and mercy for the neglected, for the outsiders, for the down-and-out began flooding the streets. Grace poured out to everyone. These people were a kind, gracious force for good wherever they went. **Jesus is Lord of ALL**—was what they said. And **ALL** included **their** hearts, souls, minds and strength.

- b. Before the first century even started, some churches were already getting off track. In Corinth, the church became divided. Instead of loving driving what they did—they became obsessed with who was right and who wasn't.

-By the time John wrote the Revelation—things were **so** far off in one church—Laodicea—that he said, "You've left your first love. You're lukewarm." The story of the Church is that when it got a **little** off—it didn't take long before it got a **lot** off. The institutional church actually found itself, at some stages, directly opposing everything Jesus stood for. People believed and recited the creeds and called Jesus **Lord**—when their actions were **anti-Christ**.

- c. You'd think that Christianity becoming the official religion in the Roman Empire would be an incredible win, wouldn't you? But it wasn't. **Christendom**—which Christianity degraded into, became obnoxious, power-hungry, greedy—and ruthlessly evil.

-See, power and influence do **not** mix well with people who are called to be servants—slaves of all. Power and influence and wealth do not naturally create humility, forgiveness, meekness and grace.

-It was in **that** era the instead of **being** persecuted, the institution, with the name **Christian** stapled onto it—became known for its torture and oppression. Think about that! “Follow Jesus, Prince of Peace, or we'll torture you to death!” And to hide its corruption, the religious establishment kept the records of Jesus away from the people—and gave **itself** the power to send people to hell if they rebelled.

-Can we just be honest here? The stuff that happened then—and still happens in some places—makes all of Heaven shriek. And the spiritual abuse didn't just stay overseas—it got exported in this awful form to the indigenous peoples who lived here.

- d. You have to ask yourself, “How in the Name of God did all this stuff happen? How could people who claim the Name of Jesus get **so** far off track? Answer? One percent at a time—to the point that what is offensive and unloving and totally unlike Jesus actually gets officially blessed as **normal!** And we hear about it all the time, don't we? Where people who **call** themselves Followers of Jesus are sometimes rude and arrogant and judgmental—everything Jesus warned the Pharisees about.

-People in our culture connect this with Christianity—when it has nothing whatsoever to do with Jesus!

- e. So, why don't people change? I'll tell you why; it's easier to rip a few Bible verses out of context to justify yourself—than admit you're wrong and change. And then that 1% leaks and poisons even the good things we do—like truth, goodness and compassion. Jesus warned about this, remember? That really good things—like prayer, fasting, and helping the poor—could turn into a show that is about us looking more spiritual than others.

-**Anything** can be contaminated. Truth, instead of setting you free, can become about being right—and make us arrogant. Courage, when it gets off-track, can get mouthy and rude and offensive.

-Religion, at the core, is this hardened form of faith and truth that doesn't really need Jesus to carry on. And without Jesus as the Head, the Church becomes this headless, brainless, monster that kills instead of giving life.

4. So far, we've been talking about Solomon—and about those **other** people who are off-course. It's easy—and sometimes kinda fun—in a sick sort of way—to talk about

those others who are off course. But ultimately, this whole issue of being 100% fully devoted to God and all He's up to gets **very** personal. See, we sing songs and read verses about being fully devoted—but no one can be **fully devoted** for me. This is a directional decision everyone has to make down in their hearts—in the control center of life.

-Please know this; sin—rebellion—always travels in the **off-percentage**. If we are 99% devoted to God, the 1% we're off isn't neutral—it's devoted to **something**—usually an idol. I mean, there's **some** reason why we don't want to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. We're afraid we'll have to humble our pride, deprive ourselves of sexual gratification—or modify how we pursue affluence, popularity, power, control—whatever. And sin, like cancer, won't just be good and behave and stay contained. It feeds on healthy tissue to grow itself.

-Now, I want to clarify something very important at this point. Does loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength mean that you have to become a perfect person? Does loving your child with all your heart make you a perfect parent? No—any more than playing hockey with all your heart makes you an NHL pro. It simply means that you give it **all you have**. That even if something **seems** momentarily like a better deal, you will not betray the relationship. See, Jesus **IS** Lord; loving Him with all your heart is simply refusing to rob Him of that.

- a. Let's think through the pieces of this for a few minutes. How, for example, do you love God with all your heart? Is it a **feeling** thing? No—your heart is what drives you. It's not just passion; it's where you make your decisions and choices.

-Would anyone here ever even **think** of coaching a kid in education, sports or music with, "Yeah, just give it a half-hearted attempt?" Half-hearted is weak, insipid, limp! To love God half-heartedly is an act of contempt; it's like damning Him—the Creator of all—the Giver of all good things with faint praise. That's why God was so angry with Solomon. His half-hearted devotion contaminated **everyone he led** and **everything he touched!**

-Our **heart** is ultimately the seat of what we love most—and therefore, what drives every decision. Loving God with **all** your heart means, in **every** decision, asking, "God—what would please you? What would fit with what **You're** doing?"

- b. What does it mean to love God with **all** your soul? Think about what it means to have someone as a **soul-mate**. It's talking about the depth of relational connectedness. That you anticipate what each other wants—and you're **all there!** When you're someone's soul-mate, your relationship with them comes before **anything** or **anyone** else.
- c. What does it mean to love God with all your mind? Your mind is this flow of thoughts. Loving God with all your mind means letting Him **renew** the way you think—and **how** you think. We think about a **lot** of stuff—some good and life-giving; some rotten. What we think about—we become. For example, if you're

always thinking self-pitying, *life-isn't-fair* thoughts—or unforgiving hateful thoughts—they will contaminate your decisions, your faith and your relationships.

-That's why **God's** plan is to **renew** our minds—and, in the process, **transform** our lives. To have your mind renewed, you need to expose it to the way **God** thinks and the truth of what God says about life.

- d. And what would it mean to love God with all our strength? Well, what **is** strength? Well, it's usually quantifiable, comes a variety of forms—and has limits to it, doesn't it? **Energy, time, attention, finances and influence** are all forms of strength, aren't they? Loving God with all of these means that in your daily life you use these strengths in a way that benefits others—and honors what God wants to accomplish in this world!

5. And Jesus also made it clear that being fully devoted to God—loving Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength—is not just a vertical thing; it gets translated horizontally into loving others as we love ourselves. Interesting, Jesus never told people to hate themselves or despise themselves or abuse themselves. He just said, "**Love your neighbor AS yourself.**" I'm guessing that this means more than just having nice thoughts about others and flashing the occasional smile.

-Jesus' story about this didn't involve a close friend or a family member. It involved a guy helping someone right in his path; a person who would normally reject him as a friend. And it involved sacrifices of time and money. John, one of Jesus' closest disciples, said, "Don't say you love God if you won't love and serve the people He loves."

- a. This, friends, is where the rubber meets the road in our faith. See, loving God with everything we are is theory up to this point. It's critical to life. But Jesus didn't leave it there. Love came in the shape of a cross. Loving God—and loving others.

-And it's **this** kind of love that makes the church that Jesus died to create the salt of the earth and the light of the world. **This** is the kind of love that attracts people to Jesus—and gives weight to all He said and credibility to his followers. When you read stories about heroes—it's not about people who have great theories—and spend hours in private study and meditation. It's about people who love like Jesus loved! It's love that's always on the search for some way to give itself. Remember the teapot? Love **always** has a spout!

- b. Now, if I've made you feel uncomfortable in anyway—you need to know that I've made **me** feel uncomfortable too. See, in our crazy, busy, margin-less expensive lives here in the GTA—we can get sucked right into the cycle of being too busy, distracted and maxed out financially to think about anyone else. Friends that will **naturally** happen unless we confront it and resist it!

-Whenever we are challenged on giving our time and resources to love others and engage in what God is doing—what's our first excuse? "Well, see, I'm so

busy! And we just can't **afford...**" Know what that means? It just means that if we're going to make **any** difference at all with our lives, we will have to think **strategically about how we will love others AS we love ourselves.**

*How will I love the people who are right in my path? Who are sometimes **in my way**—slowing me down?

*And what about the people in desperate need in our world? I can't help them all—but I can help **someone.**

*And how will my children, my closest friends, my spouse, my co-workers, my brothers and sisters in the faith be loved by me?

*How will I get **beyond** just loving those who are most like me, who agree with me, pat me on the back—tell me I'm right?

-Well, let's say we just never get around to that—cause it's just too hard. Well, what's left is—left **overs.** To not be **whole**-hearted is to be **half**-hearted. And no one wants to stand before God and hand in a life like that!

-A question: Would you want God to be as devoted to you as you are to Him?

6. Can we just have an **honest to God** moment here? What do you **really** believe, in your heart of hearts, that we should be as the people of Jesus—the Church Jesus founded 2000 years ago when He walked out of the grave and sent his followers in the power of the Spirit to change the world? What should we be like if **we** are His plan to redeem every life?

-See, we can just pretend that everything's okay with the way church has crystallized again and again in our world. Sometimes it's been a power-monger. A bully—with no accountability—that crushed anyone who got in its way. Sometimes it's a religious establishment—with a privileged class—who wear special clothes, are called by special titles—and get to do all the really important things for God—with clients who come in for special services—you know, from the guy paid to hatch, match and dispatch.

-We can be a group of people who look more like a club than a mission. A group of friends who get together once a week, pay our dues, talk about God, and stuff ourselves with more and more and more and more information—and then go back to our week as undercover followers of Jesus.

- a. When it comes to all this stuff about being **fully devoted—100%** to God, to loving Him—loving **what** He loves and **who** He loves with all our heart, soul, mind and strength—we can just make excuses.

"Yeah, I know I should be 100% there...but..."

*I'm a busy person. Like *you have no idea...*

*I barely have enough time and money for myself...!

*Well, I'll never be the Mother Theresa type. Hey, I try not to hurt anyone

*I'm just too angry to give up my grudge...

*I think I can do a better job of managing my life...

*I'm sorry, but I just can't trust God with my relational world. If I do, I know I'll get stuck alone...

- b. Or...or we can agree together, as a community, that to love God half-heartedly is a disastrous decision. We can agree that God deserves the **best**—not leftovers like He's the family dog.

-We can agree that just being another religious organization just doesn't cut it. That we are part of a mission—and that what we are up to—joining God to seek and save those who have been lost—and what has been lost—is the most important thing happening in this world.

-We can agree that **playing** church and **pretending** to love—just won't cut it. We can agree to lay aside the stupid differences we have with each other—and unite in the life-changing mission of Jesus. That our gatherings are really about being encourage and equipped to be **Good News** to all of the people we encounter in any given week!

-We can agree that **we** will be a force for good in this world—uniting together to see people transformed, to see people included who feel shoved to the edges of life—to see healing and peace and joy returned where it has been lost; to become a fighting force for the redemption of this world and a broken creation.

-We can agree together—that we will be the kind of followers that will flip this powerless, anemic, judgmental, unloving, hypocritical view our culture has of the **Church**—on it's back. That 99% won't cut it!

- c. When it's all said and done--what do **you** want to happen through you? What kind of life do you want to hand in to Jesus at the end of time? 99% is 1% short!