



basic
TRAINING

A 9-Day Plan

BASIC TRAINING

9-Day Devotional

Featuring excerpts from

The Heart of a Warrior

by Michael Thompson

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1. The Great Exchange

If we are going to be trained in how to fight in this battle, we must first clearly understand that the battle is all about Love. Our Savior and King was a specialist and He wants nothing less than to train us in the Art of War ... Loving others back to Life and wielding His power and authority against our enemies, those that work on behalf of the kingdom of darkness. Attempting to thwart that for which we were made as Image Bearers, to steal, kill and destroy our intimacy and connectedness with God and each other.

Remember the story from the Garden of Eden? Adam and Eve were tricked, lied to; told that God was holding out on them and they could create a better part for themselves (...be like God). *Sin* entered the story and we fell. Sin-full, Adam and Eve are no longer innocent or naïve but tainted. Strategically, they are escorted outside the garden lest they eat of the Tree of Life and stay. Now marred and scarred from the wounding assault, Life is diminished to life. They are haunted by the hope that one day they will get it all back. What is broken will be healed, the old made new, what was lost will be returned. That is the movement and rhythm of our Larger Story: Restoration ... making it all sinless again.

Restoration comes through increments and installments. First, the Father shows us what living as His son looks like in Jesus. Then the Father rescues us *through* the Son, making the greatest exchange ever made, one Son's life for many ... Jesus' life for ours. Bookended between the first and last verses of Romans 8 are the details of this amazing transaction.

For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

-Romans 8:3-4 NIV

For those whom He foreknew [of whom He was aware and loved beforehand], He also destined from the beginning [foreordaining them] to be molded into the image of His Son [and share inwardly His likeness], that He might become the firstborn among many brethren. And those whom He thus foreordained, He also called; and those whom He called, He also justified (acquitted, made righteous, putting them into right standing with Himself). And those whom He justified, He also glorified [raising them to a heavenly dignity and condition or state of being].

-Romans 8:29-30 AMP

God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him. After God made that decision of what his children should be like, he followed it up by calling people by name. After he called them by name, he set them on a solid basis with himself. And then, after getting them established, he stayed with them to the end, gloriously completing what he had begun.

Are you kidding me? Now that is GOOD NEWS! He became like us so we could become like Him! Jesus, near the end of his life and just before the cross, gave instructions to his closest friends, the disciples:

Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can't bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can't bear fruit unless you are joined with me. I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can't produce a thing.
-John 15:4-5 MSG

2. The “Art” of a Warrior

There is an old Celtic proverb ... *Never give a sword to a man who can't dance*. It means a man must know how to celebrate life before he can be entrusted to protect it. The battle is over love and all about love. Think about that for a minute. How easy is love? Far too often we seem to fall in and fall out, we are experts at the *conditional* kind of love. But I'm talking about experiencing a love in which you entrust your heart to another. There is only one who guarantees he will never leave or forsake, mishandle or take advantage. It is love that makes Him stay and love that is the practice and presence of Jesus, His art form. Love requires both a strength and a finesse.

Remember William Wallace's uncle Argyle? Pointing to the Braveheart sword young William is reaching out to touch, Argyle says ... “Before you can use this, you have to learn how to use this,” pointing from the sword to his nephew's head. William's father told him, “I know you can fight but it's our wits that make us men.” More battles are won in the strategy, planning and preparation than on the field. There is an *Art* to the practice of a Warrior's life: silence, solitude, patience, and an inner world of rhythm, beauty and strength. We *will* have to fight, but that isn't what a Warrior is nor what he does. A Warrior is a *peacekeeper*, one who loves well and is about freedom and life ... providing it, protecting it and promoting it ... ready to fight for it if needed. It was the author Victor Hugo who wrote in his classic, *Les Miserables*, (1862),

Life's greatest happiness is to be convinced we are loved.

“AMEN” to that! A man who knows he is loved is a Beloved Son, and a man who knows he is a Beloved Son possesses one of the great treasures of the Kingdom, a settled heart. A man who is *settled* is a man who is free to love all those around him fiercely *and* tenderly. Jesus rolls out the challenge to love even those who are against you. Love your enemies (Luke 6:35). These are the hearts who are yet to experience that they too are the beloved; no doubt they will be affected by the presence of a man who is settled and knows how to both fight and dance. It was Sarah Young in *Jesus Calling* who wrote,

Teaching you would be simple if I negated your free will or overwhelmed you with My Power. However, I love you too much to withdraw the godlike privilege I bestowed on you as My image-bearer.

3. We Need Warriors

He became like us so that we could become like Him. Stay close to the King, as close as a branch is to its vine (John 15:5). First and foremost, mission #1: Stay Intimately Connected to The King. I in Him and He in me! Whatever else happens, whatever else doesn't happen, Warriors stay close to their King. This is what a Warrior's heart must learn. *He* is where our Life is and *He* is where our Life comes from. Jesus got out of the way what was in the way of our intimacy. He showed us what was most important ... *staying connected to the Father*. He showed us how and told us why... we are encouraged and warned to do the same. Our King knows the Art of War ...

THEN JESUS, full of and controlled by the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led in [by] the [Holy] Spirit for (during) forty days in the wilderness (desert), where He was tempted (tried, tested exceedingly) by the devil.
-Luke 4:1-2 AMP

In World War II, the United States entered a conflict that had been well underway for almost 10 years. It was March 20, 1933, when Nazi Germany completed the construction of the first concentration camp, Dachau. Shortly after their defeat in WWI, those in Germany quietly began regrouping and re-advancing their cause for European domination. As the German invasions and advances grew through the 1930's, Great Britain and France were finally provoked into declaring war; it was September 3, 1939. Why so late? Evil had finally come to their doorstep. 1939 wasn't the beginning of Nazi treachery, just the beginning of its threat to the English and French ways of life. From 1939-1941 the US was very concerned, watched what was happening and did all it could to *not* be pulled into the war.

With one eye on Europe and another on Japan, evil had come to the United States *living room*, and on December 8, 1941, the day after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the US enters the fight on two fronts. How can Germany and Japan, both about the size of California, come to occupy and dominate so much of the world? What those evil dictators and their soldiers were doing to human lives would later be discovered and thought unimaginable.

The conflict we have been born into has a history that can be traced back to some of our own doing. Now, right now, there are two kingdoms at war and the battles rage over the alliance, allegiance and affection of our hearts. One kingdom offers the truth, the truth that will set us free (John 8:32). The other kingdom, the lesser one, offers lies disguised as the truth (John 8:44). Lies, that if believed, will both bind and enslave, keeping our hearts from what they were most created for, love. The prince of darkness has operated unchecked for far too long at the borders of our hearts, and for far too long they've been doing the unimaginable. Pastor and author, Erwin McManus, wrote in his book, *The Barbarian Way*,

What if we were meant to be something greater? The invitation of Jesus is a revolutionary call to fight for the heart of humanity. Our weapons are Faith, Hope and Love... it will cost everything. It is a life fueled by passion... passion for God and passion for people. Our mission- to reconnect humanity to Him. Fueled by His presence as a follower of Christ, there is a raw and untamed faith waiting to be unleashed.

My one caveat to McManus' point is that our "first mission" is to *reconnect* with God, *reconnect*, again and again and stay connected (vines and branches), our hearts to His. This is what the battle is all about ... receiving God's love. Once secured, then ... *then* ...we can join the battle and offer our strength, what we are experiencing from God. We can offer a transforming intimacy we know and live to model and share, just like Jesus did. As mentioned, Intimacy with the One who loves us most is our priority #1 and most central. Lose connection with the Vine and the branch dies. If this is our priority then know this is opposed. The Warrior Heart must know and expect opposition. A man doesn't have to sign up or decide to get in a war but he can and needs to understand that he is and therefore engage!

4. What We Fight For

We fight because hearts are captive. This Great War in which we find ourselves and every one of its battles, are all about Love...being Loved and then Loving. That is where Life is... so that is where the enemy attacks. The enemy of a man's heart knows that being loved makes for a settled heart, a full heart... and makes all the difference in the world when stepping into the battle for the hearts of others! Jesus lived this way and taught this way ...

Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other. -John 13:34-35 MSG

Later in John 17, Jesus prays for our protection in this great war, we must need it ...

I do not ask that You will take them out of the world, but that You will keep and protect them from the evil one. -John 17:15 AMP

The POWs, the casualties, the bondage and the blindness experienced by so many caught in the middle of this Great War is *why* we fight. After all, the Warrior knows well, "that used to be me." Yes, we were among the prisoners and casualties ... but not anymore! We are in a great conflict, a spiritual battle regarding whose image we bear, and whether or not we are the Beloved. Claims and accusations are being made against us that we are not the Beloved, but there is good news: there is a counterclaim being made for each of us, declaring that we are free, worth dying for and therefore the Beloved! "He became like us ..."

Men must come to know, then hold onto and guard who they truly are and must also understand what they are up against: an enemy who wants to know if we know who we truly are. The greatest weapon Satan and the kingdom of darkness use against the human heart are falsehoods, propaganda, lies to convince men (and women) that they are not the Beloved. This is how this war works and what it is all about ... Love. This is what we fight for and how we are to take up the fight and advance the Kingdom of Christ.

Jesus said, we will know the truth "and the truth will set us free." (John 8:32.36). Paul tells us, "we have been set free from sin." (Romans 6:18). Peter shouts, "Live as free men." (1 Peter 2:16). David wrote, "You have set my heart free." (Psalm 119:32). It was the great former slave and abolitionist leader, Fredrick Douglass who said,

They would not call it slavery, but some other name. Slavery has been fruitful in giving herself names ... and it will call itself by yet another name; and you and I and all of us had better wait and see what new form this old monster will assume, in what new skin this old snake will come forth.

Nelson Mandela once said, “For to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.” It was Eisenhower that said, “Freedom is not long entrusted to the weak or the timid.” The parallels are not accidental, rather they are great. What goes on in our physical world is a direct reflection of what is going on in the spiritual, not vice versa. John Eldredge wrote, “Every step toward life and freedom is opposed ... if you want *Life* you are going to have to fight for it.” What we are learning and fighting for is freedom. What we are fighting against are the accusations, lies, false beliefs and the agents of darkness who fight to take us out.

5. Seeing

It cannot be stressed enough nor experienced more greatly. We were once in bondage and now through Christ and in Christ we are free. We live with a gravitational pull toward the old ways of the old nature. We fight for freedom! Learning how to live freely ... this is what our training is all about. After our initial healing from our wounds (as many times as we need to enter into confession and repentance) we engage our will and we intentionally guard our hearts and say *no* to that which will impede or strip our freedom. We say *yes* to all that is available in Christ and from Christ that will secure *and* advance our freedom (Proverbs 4:23).

Training His Beloved Sons to *see, hear and discern* between the two kingdoms ... life or death, this is what the Father is up to in the hearts and lives of His Beloved Sons. It is what Jesus practiced and so must we.

We have all heard the saying, "seeing is believing." A large part of the training that Jesus is going to take us through is the ability to see. If we don't see "it", then it is impossible to discern "it", and if a man cannot discern well, he will cause far more harm than good in his life. When Jesus was dealing with his disciples, He was dealing with the challenge of training the untrained and naïve men. They didn't see well, no one had taught them. They didn't know what they didn't know and Jesus really wanted them to know ... *know what?*... Know experientially who He was, how the Kingdom works and therefore who they are! See "it", understand "it" and engage, *step into your role*.

Paul wrote, "Take every thought captive". (2 Corinthians 10:5). This 10th chapter of 2 Corinthians is a chapter full of warfare training for the Beloved Sons amidst the spiritual battle they find themselves. Before a thought can be captured it has to be seen. You can't observe what you don't see. It's the things I never saw coming or coming out of me that have either run over me or run over others. Will Rogers once said,

***Good judgment comes from experience,
and a lot of experience comes from bad judgment.***

It's the way *training* works. No one knows *how* at first. Just think about all the first times we have in our lives. There are too many to count and in those moments we usually "don't know what to do" and therefore those moments usually don't go so well. Why? ... because we have never been there before. There is a normal and natural part of our training in becoming more like Christ. Along the journey we learn in reflection hind sight of our experiences and reflection we are to identify the things in us that are not us and are not "like Christ". The things that are not of His Kingdom way have to be seen. Critical is the point that what isn't like Christ in a Beloved Son, isn't the Beloved Son. It is something else, namely the false self. But if you don't see them...you don't see them. It is just as valuable to know what you don't want and who you aren't as it is to know what you do want and who you really are.

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6. Listening

Slow things down! It's all training: what to do, what not to do and be careful how and what you conclude. The false self is often quick and first to run some commentary of how you should act, react, judge or accuse. Every moment has a multitude of concluding variables, never just "one thing". Much is going on in every scene of our lives. There is always more going on!

Abraham Lincoln once said. "Better to be silent and thought a fool than to speak up and remove all doubt."

The Apostle James, wrote,

Understand [this], my beloved brethren. Let every man be quick to hear [a ready listener], slow to speak, slow to take offense and to get angry.
-James 1:19 AMP

The Warrior's Heart must learn that God is good and up to good in his life. Training is the Father's aim so he can entrust and deploy His Beloved Sons into many different situations where the Father wants a Kingdom presence. Learning how to be and bring that presence takes time. Look at the letters the apostles wrote to the churches. Not the same men who walked the Roman roads of 1st Century Palestine and yet they were the same men. Learning how to live freely takes time and many redeeming moments. The Father is patient and is training us to be also.

Shhhh. Listen ...what do you hear? This may be one of the most crucial skills a Warrior must cultivate and practice. Seeing is truly important, but hearing is imperative! If the Holy Spirit is to *counsel, teach, guide and comfort us*, then we are going to have to learn how to listen. If we are to become a Beloved Son and enter into the battle as warriors...hearing the still small voice of God in our hearts is essential. There is no Life without listening, receiving from our God. Jeffery Satinover, an Orthodox Jew, psychiatrist and author wrote,

I have often wondered why the voice of God is so quiet and so still. Perhaps He is trying to train us to listen. Just as by his very quiet the gentleman in a room of shouting oafs eventually compels attention, perhaps God draws us to His voice not by out-shouting our inner babble, but by the whispered truths that reveal His character.

It is a crowded place, a man's inner world. It's downright rowdy at times. Seldom do we check the voices as to their source. Let's add them up ... you have a true self and a false self living in you. Christ lives in you in the form of the Holy Spirit laying out the truth *and* the enemy of your heart is looking for opportune times to drop lies. It's pretty easy to see: we are never alone! But then the question is, can you discern? Do you pay attention to your thoughts and what voice has the microphone? Do you know the voice of God? We should!

Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"
-Mark 9:7 NIV

Is this for just the three on the mount of transfiguration or for twelve or for the many Beloved Sons to come? Until we are trained, most of the time it is the false self speaking about most things. Complaining, accusing, annoyed, labeling, judging, inconvenienced, impatient, name calling, dramatic, frustrated, anger, vengeful and all the language that comes along with such false self commentary.

Listening is one of the most loving and kind things we can do...for the hearts of others and for our own. What's great is that you get a lot of time and opportunity to practice. How do you listen to your wife and your kids? Try and observe your skills for a day, give your kids your eyes... look at your wife when she is talking,. your ears...hone in on their words shutting out all other noise and distraction. If you make it to eight seconds, same amount of time they call it "a ride" on the back of a bull, you're well on your way.

The practice of *listening* is crucial to posturing a man for everything his heart will need to receive. Asking and inviting God to speak, then listening... this is the practice of an oriented man, the practice of a Warrior Heart. It will save you a lot of trouble, disarm the enemy's attempts to lure you into judgment and allow for wisdom and understanding, qualities Christ wants to impart to the men of His Kingdom.

***He who answers a matter before he hears the facts—
it is folly and shame to him.***
-Proverbs 18:13 AMP

One of the things Jesus was known for was asking questions. Look through the gospels, one of the old NIV versions with red print for when Jesus is speaking and circle all the places you see a question mark. Jesus is so loving, and one of the ways He loved was asking questions then giving folks His attention ... listening. He asks we do the same.

7. Living Curiously

One of the most difficult things a Warrior will have to learn is to be still. *Being still* (Psalm 46:10) is a daily practice of a Warrior heart, one uncommon to most men. Only in aggressively being still, pushing all the clamor and busyness aside can a man truly experience God.

***Be still and know that I am God.
-Psalm 46:10***

When Jesus taught “prayer” to his disciples, He taught them more than just what to say. He taught them *how to listen* ...

***Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace.
-Matthew 6:6 MSG***

This is what prayer then is ... conversation where we are invited to see and listen. I confess, prayer for much of my life was submitting a list to God for Him to take care of for me. If we are still doing all the talking when we pray, we're in a recital rather than a dialog. If you're in a Large Story in which a great battle rages on, getting orders and direction seems to be of grave importance. The Warrior will see his prayer Life change, more a discussion...less monologue. Prayer becomes more; more our first impulse rather than our last resort. I love this encouragement from Oswald Chambers,

We tend to use prayer as a last resort, but God wants it to be our first line of defense. We pray when there's nothing else we can do, but God wants us to pray before we do anything at all.

A few years back, I was with a couple of dozen good men at a weekend retreat. Together we were exploring and discovering the truths of the Kingdom. A large part of one day was set aside to go whitewater rafting. Not my favorite thing but I was game for what the team had scheduled. We were briefed and loaded onto our boats, six man teams along with a guide and away we went. Our guide was a big man, in his early 60's, burly and barking at us every chance he got ...*“You boys paddle like girls... whose turn is it to bounce overboard on this next stretch... you should probably know, a couple folks died a few years back at this next stretch of rapids.”* When the day was over my mind was made up: “I hate whitewater rafting!”

Fast-forward a year ... same retreat, same men and guess what, we're white water rafting again. Not me! I ain't going; *I hate whitewater rafting!* One of my close friends, Jeff, caught wind that I was staying back and so he asked me what was up. I explained last year's debacle and he smiled and said *come on, you don't hate whitewater rafting; you hate being guided badly.* My curiosity got the best of me and

I loaded onto the bus. We were briefed and split into teams again and my friend Jeff proceeds to introduce us to our guide. She was as wide as she was tall with arms the girth of my legs. She called me "sweetheart" and called us "her boys". We got boat and crew in the water and practiced moving our oars to her commands after which each time she yelled, "You boys are good!" After the first obstacle of danger was avoided, she yelled so loud, the whole river could hear, "I got the best crew on the river!" My friend Jeff was right; I didn't hate whitewater rafting (granted I'm still not the first one in line) I hated being guided badly.

Oswald Chambers taught that to find the origin of a thought (its source) take it to its end. Play the thought out to its logical conclusion so you can see where it will land. Is it blessing, encouraging, validating, of worth or value? If it is *Loving* then it is from the Father. If it is accusation, guilt, shame or fear resulting in the invitation for you to judge, hide, criticize or diminish yourself or another, then it is not Love, and it is not for you. These unruly thoughts of the false self or the lures and temptations from the enemy of our heart need to be seen, captured and brought to Christ for handling. Take every thought captive and in order to do that, a Warrior lives curiously. My experience is that my false self moves quickly and so do the fallen angels of the kingdom of darkness. Patience is needed for far more than just waiting; it is necessary for a man to have in order for him to be cunning. Being cunning is knowing the difference between making a moment happen and letting a moment happen. As we walk with God we will find He is training us far more often to be ready, as opposed to making something happen. As I look back and see many moments in my life that I wish I could relive and do over again, I can't think of *any* moments when I sensed God saying, "That was it; you missed it, that was the only shot I was going to give you to do the right thing ... when will you learn?"

8. Fighting from a Good Heart

Again, move slowly ... assess the situation ... ask God questions. What is this Lord? Why is this? Do you want me to move or stay put? Should I say something or just listen? This is the prayerful way of a Warrior ... *living curiously*. It is what Paul meant when he wrote, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). I used to believe this wasn't possible, now, through dialog with God, I'm coming around!

Remember, the false-self/flesh moves quickly, it reacts rather than responds. Many moments a man will be invited to think or say things that are not true or to judge himself or others harshly. Critical are the moments when a man sees, hears, and asks God for help, instruction and direction. Jesus did this; everything He said and did was in harmony and alignment with the Father. Jesus knew where people's hearts were, often because He asked. He knew their motives and their hopes, if they were with him or against him. He lives in us. The Holy Spirit wants to guide, counsel and teach a man if that man will let Him.

It just doesn't make sense, to tell men Sunday after Sunday that they are "sinners" and that they are the problem. Telling folks they have wicked hearts and chastising them for sinning ... what is the point of that? If I have a sinful, wicked heart, doesn't it make sense that sin will be my normal? If I act in accordance with what they say I am, a wicked hearted sinner, then what is the big deal when I sin? But if I am something else, something more, then it really is a big deal.

Expectations follow ability and with ability come expectations. Either I have the ability to live this Life Christ has saved me in which to live or I don't. Peter, James, John and Paul all write their letters to first century believers as if we can get better, and have the equipment within us to get better. The old heart of stone (Jeremiah 17:9, Ezekiel 11:19) is *replaced*, the Father has given His sons new ones (Jeremiah 24:7, Ezekiel 18:31); our center has been made *noble and good* (Luke 8:15) ... now we are to go and learn how to live from what is good within us. Weekly bashings aren't going to be helpful, telling a man he is *less*. The invitation is to become *more* and He gives us the equipment to be exactly that!

Don't get me wrong here. Paul, Peter, James and John have plenty to say about "drifting away, making poor choices, and compromising the truth of the Gospel for performance and achievement". They address this death of grace by warning about the *performance* incentives to the Gospel the Judizers or Gnostics or other religious salesmen were selling. The apostles say it just about the same way in each letter they write:

What are you doing... don't do that, you used to do that because you _____ couldn't help it, that is who you were, now you can help it, that's not who _____ you are now. Now you are _____! Therefore ...

Just fill in the blank: Sons, overcomers, righteous, holy, co-heirs, accepted, worthy, redeemed, complete, chosen, righteous ... they all write that we are *more*, especially Paul. He goes as far as to say we are ever increasing!

And all of us, as with unveiled face, [because we] continued to behold [in the Word of

God] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His very own image in ever increasing splendor and from one degree of glory to another; [for this comes] from the Lord [Who is] the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18 (AMP)

And why wouldn't we have a *glory*? God does. His starts with a capital "G": ours, those who bear His image and are becoming more and more like him, ours starts with a small "g", *glory*. "Chips off the ol' block ... the apple doesn't fall far from the tree...we have our Father's ... *image*! The word glory simply means, the weightiness, grandness, the splendor of a thing ... *it's glory* and the sons of God have one!

This glory is held in our hearts and to be demonstrated in our actions and words, in how we love one another. Our glory is the true me and the true you. The glory of our life, our true self wants to burst out, bear fruit, be offered and be experienced by others and the world. Our glory is meant to be shared. Gifts entrusted to each man for others. Not using our glory or it being used but free. *Using* and *loving* have nothing to do with one another. I don't use my kids and I don't believe God uses His. He shares his Life with us, bestows His love on us and takes up residence in our hearts making us alive in Him. That is why the heart is both core and central! John Eldredge writes in his book, *Waking the Dead*,

The heart is central. That a man needs to be reminded of this only shows how far we have fallen from the life we were meant to live-or how powerful the spell has been. The subject of the heart is addressed in the Bible more than any other topic-more than "works" or "serve," more than "believe" or "obey," more than money and even more than worship. Maybe God knows something we've forgotten. But of course-all those other things are matters of the heart. Consider but a few passages:

*Love the LORD your God with all your **heart** and with all your soul and with all your strength. -Deuteronomy 6:5*

*Jesus called this the greatest of all the commandments (Luke 10:27) and notice that the **heart** comes first.*

*Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the **heart**. -1 Samuel 16:7*

*Where your treasure is, there your **heart** will be also. -Luke 12:34*

*Trust in the LORD with all your **heart**, and lean not on your own understanding. -Proverb 3:5*

*Your word I have treasured in my **heart**, that I may not sin against You. -Psalm 119:11 NASB*

*These people honor me with their lips, but their **hearts** are far from me. -Matthew 15:8*

*For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose **hearts** are fully committed to him. -2 Chronicles 16:9*

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9. Guard Your Heart and Love One Another

Above all else, guard your heart ... at all times. -Proverbs 4:23

If your heart is broken, you need healing before you can re-enter the battle for the hearts of others. When someone operates from their false self, don't take it personally and don't pronounce judgments on them. They are going through healing and training as well. Just be the Beloved. Warriors Live and Love from a good heart. Jesus said to his apprentices,

***You're blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right.
Then you can see God in the outside world.
-Matthew 5:8 MSG***

Now with a good heart, we are equipped to step into what we were made for ... Love. There is no greater life giving thing than love, especially when a man says it or does it. Nothing against the feminine heart and their capacity to love ... oh, how wonderfully they bear God's image! But men, fathers, husbands, brothers ... when we love ... it alters things. When we love we are saying, "I see you, you belong, I choose you, I love what I see!" Love is full of acceptance, significance, worth, belonging and validation for a wanting and weary heart! And because it matters so much when men love, we see the enemy target men's hearts in attempt to ensure that they won't. A.W. Tozer wrote,

The Christian need not expect to escape opposition. As long as Satan stands to resist the sons of God, as long as the world and the flesh remain, the believing man will meet opposition. Sometimes it will be sharp and obvious, but mostly it will be just the hidden and unsuspected friction set up by circumstances. No one need be anxious about this, however, for God has figured it in and made allowance for it.

Jesus expands The Greatest Command when He instructs his friends before he leaves ...

***I've told you these things for a purpose: that my joy might be your joy, and your joy wholly mature. This is my command: Love one another the way I loved you. This is the very best way to love. Put your life on the line for your friends. You are my friends when you do the things I command you. I'm no longer calling you servants because servants don't understand what their master is thinking and planning. No, I've named you friends because I've let you in on everything I've heard from the Father.
-John 15:11-15 MSG***

This is what the battle is ALL about. It is our battle cry; our pledge of allegiance; it is the song written on our hearts to sing. Love is what we were made for and in love He restore us... in order for His men to first receive and experience Him and then offer Him. Love, not just training us up in it but turning us into love ... this is the Kingdom family

business. It *will* take some training up and then, it will take everything we have and everything we are as men to protect it and see it done. Love won't happen without a fight. "He became like us so we could become like Him!" It was author George Eliot, who wrote, "It's never too late to be what you could have been." It's all about Love. We have unfortunately experienced it so *conditionally* most of our lives that the move to *unconditional* is going to be significant, drastic and critical. A man can't just buckle down and do this. Love is something that happens to him and then settles his heart. What does it look like? Jesus showed us and Paul wrote it down. Think of it as the Resume of Jesus!

Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut, Doesn't have a swelled head, Doesn't force itself on others, Isn't always "me first," Doesn't fly off the handle, Doesn't keep score of the sins of others, Doesn't revel when others grovel, Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, Puts up with anything, Trusts God always, Always looks for the best, Never looks back, But keeps going to the end.

-1 Corinthians 13:4-7 MSG

There is a reason this passage is read so often at weddings. Our bridegroom, Christ, is committed to loving this way and is inviting us to follow his lead in the great romance amidst the Great battles in this fallen place. There is more training and more glory ahead. When we are responsible with what has been given, more is given. For the *more!!!*

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