

## THE BIG IDEA: The Spirit of God warms the heart of man

### The Take-Off

I told you early on how much fun this December series was going to be, and I wasn't wrong, was I?

Week 1 - White Christmas helped us understand that we can DEAL with disappointment through HOPE

Week 2 - Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer reminded us that tragedy happens and that the pain and loss many of us feel this time of year highlights how important it is that we REST in PEACE

This week, we heard the (somewhat awkward) Christmas song, "Baby, It's Cold Outside," and it reminds us that we need to stay warm in a cold world, and while I had a direction that I had planned on going with this, over the last few weeks God has really challenged me and so the message has changed.

Originally, this was going to be all about how we need each other to stay warm, and so you and I really need to be sure that we're in a group so that we don't find ourselves isolated and cold.

But there's so much more to this than getting in a group, and let me explain that before we jump in.

You can actually be in a group that is harmful, because while a group can ensure that you aren't alone, the group itself cannot ensure that you're not cold.

We need a bit of science to frame this in a way that makes sense, and then we'll hit some points and observations that will help us live this out.

In my prep for this message, I researched quite a bit about how the body stays warm, and everything I found kept coming back to the core temperature of the body - that as long as that core temperature is good, the body is going to be good.

Among the points that really grabbed my attention was this one: when our extremities (hands, feet, head) are cold, we put on gloves, think socks, toboggans in order to get them warm, but that the best way to keep them warm is by heating up the core temperature.

In fact, the body will actually stop sending warm blood to the hands and feet so that it can focus that warmth on keeping the internal, vital organs warm.

Think about that for just a minute: we try to warm ourselves externally, but our bodies are designed to warm ourselves internally.

If I'm standing around in the cold, I get cold. If I'm running in the cold, I tend to feel warmer as I run.

Why? My core temps rise and therefore my extremities warm up.

Yeah, I hear you. "Thank you, Mr. Know It All. But what's that got to do with Christianity and community?"

Great question, and I think the answer is that all of us are always doing 1 of 2 things: we're either cooling down or we're warming up, and while we can try to accomplish those things with "external" things, the real key to living warm in a cold world is internal.

Proverbs 4:23 tells us to guard our hearts because EVERYTHING WE DO flows from it - inside out, not outside in.

So, instead of me telling you to get warm by getting in community, I'd rather give you some tools to help you determine if you're cooling down or warming up.

### 1. Don't be COOL

a. Let's start with the worst first and get it out of the way. Here are 4 things that will COOL us down.

#### b. C - Cynicism

- We could use a lot of terms here: critical spirit, fault-finding, judgmental
- **Romans 14:10-13** / We forget that we don't get to sit in the ultimate judgement seat
- **Romans 2:1** / We are often critical of the things in others that we hate in ourselves
- If we try to, we'll find ourselves judging others by the assumption that we're better than they are
- We tend to judge others by their actions but ourselves by our intentions
- People who grow cynical often have little to no control over their tongues, and through gossip, complaining, or "sharing" they fall prey to the 2nd thing that cools our hearts

#### c. O - Opinions

- There isn't anything inherently evil about opinions, and we all have them
- But we should never make personal opinions or preferences out to be corporate commands
- **Romans 14:1-9** / Obedience to what God has shown YOU is what matters
- **Proverbs 18:2** / Strong words about seeking understanding more than our own way

- d. **O - Offense**
- Can I help you diagnose whether or not you're offended? The very suggestion offends you!
  - Offense is a prison that you've turned into a home.
  - **Proverbs 18:19** / Offended people BAR THEMSELVES IN a conversation at a time (usu. in your head!)
  - **Luke 17:1** / It's impossible to live without getting offended, but...
  - **Psalm 119:165** / ...it's possible to live without staying offended! Bulk up with the WORD!!
- e. **L - Legalism**
- Legalism turns us into GATEKEEPERS instead of GRACE GIVERS
  - Legalism sees grace as a weakness or an excuse for bad people who can't do the right things (like we can - or so we think!)
  - But Jesus RAISED the standards - Sermon on the Mount - "you've heard it said...but I say..."
  - Grace RAISES the standard by RAISING us

## 2. WARM yourself up

- a. So if we find ourselves cooling down, here's how we can WARM ourselves up
- b. **W - Worship**
- **Luke 24:31** / Not just being around Jesus, but in a way that recognized Jesus, caused the burning
  - **Psalm 18:11** / Pleasures that last forever are in His presence
- c. **A - Activity**
- Sitting around doesn't warm us up; moving does!
  - Standing in the cold is a lot different than moving in the cold
  - **John 13:17** / Sitting and knowing isn't where the blessing lies; it's in the moving and doing
  - Not because what we do earns us anything - but it warms up the core
- d. **R - Relationships**
- **Matthew 24:12** / Many will grow cold, but endurance is a sign of our salvation
  - **1 Thess. 5:1-11** / The delay can cool our passion, but we encourage one another
- e. **M - Meditation**
- I don't mean Eastern religion meditation on how good you are, but meditation on the goodness of God and the faithfulness of His word
  - **Psalm 1:1-3** / It helps us become fruitful in all seasons
  - **Joshua 1:8** / It helps us become successful in following Him
  - We meditate in order to remember what He's promised (future) and what He's provided (past)

### The Landing

As I was working through this message, I knew I didn't have a really good close, something to help us remember what matters the most - especially those of us who may find ourselves more on the cooler side of the equation

Then, as I wrapped up my long run yesterday morning, it hit me

I'd been out in the cold for a couple of hours, and once I stopped moving, my hands felt cold again, and I did what any of us would do - I cupped them together and blew on them and immediately they felt warmer

God spoke to me in that moment and reminded me that it's **the Spirit of God that WARMS the heart of man**

We won't WARM up doing 4 more things in our own strength - they all come from the Holy Spirit!

Our Worship is in Spirit and truth

Our Activity isn't by power or might, but by the Spirit

Our Relationships are solidified by the Spirit Who enables sons and daughters to say "Abba, Father!"

And Meditation only leads to transformation when we allow the Spirit to make the Word alive in us!

Truly, as the Lord said to Ezekiel in chapter 37 as he looked over a valley of dry, cold, lifeless bones, it is HIS BREATH that enters us and causes us to live.

If your heart isn't as warm as you'd like it to be, He is more than willing to breathe the warm breath of His Spirit on you and His fire WILL warm you up.

**The Spirit of God warms the heart of man.**

Let's pray.