



LOVE GOD TRUST CHRIST

Adaptation of Robert Boyd Munger's, "My Heart Christ's Home"

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, we find these words:

"That according to the riches of his glory [God] may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Ephesians 3:16-17a). Or, as another has translated, "That Christ may settle down and be at home in your hearts by faith."

One of the most remarkable Christian doctrines is that Jesus Christ Himself, through the presence of the Holy Spirit, will actually enter a heart, settle down and make Himself at home there. Christ will make the human heart His permanent residence.

Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." (John 14:23). They had a hard time understanding this. How was it possible for Him to make his home with them in this sense?

It's interesting that Jesus is repeating a theme that He spoke of with them earlier: "I go to prepare a place for you...that where I am you may be also" (John 14:2b-3). Jesus was promising his disciples that, just as He was going to heaven to prepare a place for them and would welcome them one day, now it would be possible for them to prepare a place for Him in their hearts and He would come and make His home with them.

The disciples couldn't understand this. How could this be?

Then came Pentecost. The Spirit of the living Christ was given to the church and then, they understood. God didn't dwell in Herod's temple in Jerusalem! God didn't dwell in a temple made with hands; rather now, through the miracle of the outpoured Spirit, God would dwell in human hearts. The body of the believer would be the temple of the living God and the human heart would be the home of Jesus Christ Himself.

One evening I invited Jesus into my heart. Boy, did He make an entrance! It was not a spectacular, emotional thing, but very real. He came into the darkness of my heart and turned on the light. He built a fire in the cold fireplace and banished the chill. He put on

some music where there had been stillness, and He filled the emptiness with His own loving, wonderful presence.

This, of course, is the first step in making the heart Christ's home. He has said, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." (Revelation 3:20). If you're interested in making your life a residence of the living God, let me encourage you to invite Christ into your heart and He will surely come.

After Christ entered my heart and in the joy of this new relationship I said to Him, "Lord, I want this heart of mine to be Yours. I want You to settle down and be perfectly at home here. Everything I have belongs to You. *Mi casa es su casa*. Let me give you a tour and show you all the cool features of the home." He was excited to come in, of course, and glad to be given a place in my heart.

The Office

The first room to show Him was the study. We'll call it the office of the mind. Now in my home, this room of the mind is a very small room with very thick walls. But it's an important room. It's like, the control room of the house.

He walked in with me and looked around at the books in the bookcase, my laptop on my desk, the magazines on the table, the pictures on the walls. As I followed His gaze I began to squirm. Strangely enough, I hadn't felt bad about this before, but now that *He* was there looking at these things, I was embarrassed. There were some books there that I knew at that moment did not fit with my new life in Jesus. There was a lot of trash on my computer and images on the TV that were not honoring to God or others.

I turned to Him and said, "Lord, I know that this room needs a radical renovation. Will You help me make it what you desire it to be? - to bring every thought captive to you?" "Absolutely!" He said. "I'm happy to help you. First of all, take all the things that you are reading and looking at which are not helpful, upright, good and true, and throw them out. Now put on the empty shelves the books of the Bible. Fill the room with my words and meditate on them day and night. As for the pictures on the walls, you will have difficulty controlling these images, but here's something that will help." He gave me a full-size portrait of Himself. "Hang this in the center of the room," He said, "on the wall of the mind that you might remember me and that I have come to free you from these thoughts and replace them with what is good and true." I did just that, and I have discovered through the years that when my thoughts are centered upon Christ Himself,

His presence and power cause impure thoughts to retreat. So He has helped me to take my thoughts captive for Him.

May I suggest that if you have difficulty with this little room of the mind, bring Christ in there. Pack it full with the Word of God, meditate upon it and imagine Jesus' constant presence there.

The Kitchen

From the office, we went into the kitchen, the room of appetites and desires. This was a very large room. I spent a lot of time in the kitchen and worked hard to keep it stocked with all my cravings. I said to Him, "This is a favorite room. I'm sure You'll love what I serve here."

He sat down at the kitchen table with me and asked, "So, what's on the menu for dinner?" "Well," I said, "my favorite dishes: money, academic degrees, Netflix shows, sports teams, and several of my social media platforms." These were the things I thought were feeding my soul - stuff that made me feel good about myself or when I didn't, could make me forget about myself. When the food was placed before Him, He said nothing about it. However, I noticed that He didn't eat it. I said to Him, somewhat offended, "Lord, don't You like the food? What's the matter?"

He answered, "I don't think you understand. I have much better food to eat than you could imagine. And it is much more rich and satisfying than what you have here. Remember, I came that you might have life, and have it in abundance. You could settle for this food, but I offer you a feast fit for a King! Seek Me and my Kingdom and that food will satisfy you like nothing ever will. And your cravings and desires for this other food will diminish the more you feast on the delights of the Kingdom. Taste and see for yourself!" And there at the table, He held up a spoon and gave me a taste of valuing the things God values. Mmm! What flavor! I'd never tasted anything so delicious and so filling. There's no food in the world like it. It alone satisfies. It made everything I had set before him look and smell spoiled. My taste buds had completely changed and I knew I would never taste things the same again.

Now if Christ is in your heart, what kind of food are you serving Him and what kind of food are you eating yourself? Are you living for the desires that belong to the old self? Or are you choosing God's desire for your food and drink?

The Living Room

After finishing dinner, I took Him to the living room. This room was cozy and comfortable. I liked it. It had a fireplace, overstuffed chairs, a sofa, and a quiet atmosphere. He also seemed pleased with it. He said, "This is a nice room. Let's hang out here often. It is secluded and quiet, so we can have some good conversations here." Well, naturally as a young Christian I was ecstatic. I couldn't think of anything I would rather do than spend time hanging out with Jesus.

He promised, "I'll be here every morning. Meet me here, and we'll start the day together." So, morning after morning, I would come downstairs to the living room and see Him there, waiting. He would take the Bible from the bookcase and we would read together. As He read, the words came alive because I had the Living Word right in front of me. I was encouraged, challenged, convicted and inspired. Each day I grew to know Jesus better and I found myself wanting to be more like Him. I would go throughout my days thinking about Him and imitating Him in my thoughts and interactions with others. Over time, I discovered how much knowing Jesus helped me to truly know myself and who He created me to be. These hours together were the best hours of my day.

But, little by little, as my responsibilities and the pace of life increased, this time grew shorter. I don't know why, but I thought I was just too busy to spend time with Christ. This wasn't intentional, you know; it just kind of happened. Finally, not only was the time shortened, but I began to miss a day now and then. There were people to see and places to go, work emergencies to deal with. I was needed elsewhere. So, I would miss this time together two days in a row and often more.

I remember one morning when I was in a hurry, rushing downstairs, anxious to get out the door, I passed the living room. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Him, sitting by the fireplace. Suddenly in dismay, I thought to myself, "He was my guest. I invited Him into my heart! He came as Lord of my home. And here I am neglecting Him as if we were merely roommates." I turned and went in. With a downcast glance, I said, "Oh, Lord, forgive me. Have You been here every morning?" "Yes," He said, "I told you I would be here every morning to meet with you." Then I was cut to the heart. He had been faithful in spite of my faithlessness. I asked His forgiveness and He readily forgave me as He has promised to do when we humbly turn to Him.

He said, "The problem is this: you have been thinking of our time together as something to check off your list, but you have forgotten that this time is about being together and growing in intimacy. I am not a task to be accomplished. I'm a real person with real

feelings. Remember, I love you. I have redeemed you at great cost and I deeply value our relationship.”

You know, the truth that Christ desires my companionship, that He loves me, wants me to be with Him, wants to be with me and waits for me, has done more to transform my time with God than any other single fact. Don't let Christ wait alone in the living room of your heart, but every day make some time when you may be together with Him.

The Workroom

Before long, He asked, "Do you have a workroom in your home? Let me see what you've been up to with your time and talents I've given you."

Down in the basement of the home of my heart, I had a workbench and some equipment, but I was not doing much with it. Once in a while, I would play around with a few little gadgets, but I wasn't producing anything substantial or fruitful.

I led Him down there. He looked over the workbench and said, "This is well furnished. You've got some good stuff in here to work with. How are you using these things to live out who I've designed you to be?" He looked at one or two little projects that I had thrown together on the bench and held one up to me. I said, "Lord, that is the best I can do. I know it isn't much, and I really want to do more, but after all, I have no skill or strength to do more."

"Would you like to do greater things than these?" He asked. "Certainly," I replied. "All right. Let me have your hands. Now relax and let my Spirit work through you. I know that you feel unskilled, clumsy and awkward, but the Holy Spirit is the Master-Worker, and if you let Him, He'll control your hands and your heart, He will work amazing things through you. You just need to ask and be available for Him to work."

And so, putting His great, strong hands over mine, controlling the tools with His skilled, creative fingers, He began to work through me. Joy welled up in me as I saw what we created together. It felt natural and organic to be working with Jesus- like this is exactly what I was made to do. There's much more that I need to learn and ways I need to grow, but I do know that whatever has been produced for God has been through His strong hand and through the power of His Spirit in me. And His work is beautiful and never goes to waste. Give your talents and gifts to God and He will do things with them that will surprise you.

The Rec Room

I remember the time He asked me about the rec room. I was hoping He wouldn't ask about that. There were certain associations and friendships, activities and amusements that I wanted to keep for myself. I didn't think Christ would enjoy them or approve of them, so I avoided the question.

But there came an evening when I was on my way out with some of my friends, and as I was about to cross the threshold, He stopped me with a glance and asked, "Are you going out?" I replied, "Yes." "Good," He said, "I'll come with you." "Oh," I answered rather awkwardly, drawing circles on the floor with my toe. "I don't think, Lord Jesus, that You would really want to go with us. You'd probably get bored. Let's go out tomorrow night. I bet we could find a prayer meeting to check out, but tonight I have other plans." He said. "Oh, I thought that when I came into your home, we were going to do everything together, to be close friends. I just want you to know that I am not only willing, but I want to go with you."

"Well," I deflected, "we'll go someplace together tomorrow night, I promise."

That evening I had a miserable time. I felt awful. What kind of a friend was I to Jesus when I was deliberately leaving Him out of my social spheres, doing things and going places that I knew very well He would not enjoy? When I returned that evening, I saw his light on in His room, so I went up to talk it over with Him. I said, "Lord, I've learned my lesson. I can't have a good time without You. From now on we will do everything together."

Then we went down to the rec room of the house and He transformed it. He brought into it real life, real joy, real happiness, real satisfaction, real friends, real excitement, and real fun! Laughter and music have been ringing through the house ever since. How could I forget that this Jesus, who turned water into wine, knows how to throw a good party?!

The Hall Closet

There is just one more room that I need to tell you about.

One day I found Him waiting for me at the front door. A perplexed look was in His eye. As I entered, He sniffed the air, "Do you smell that? There is a strange odor in the

house. Smells like something died around here. It's upstairs. I think it is in the hall closet."

As soon as He said this, I knew what He was talking about. Yes, there was a small closet up there on the landing, just a few square feet, and in that closet, behind lock and key, I had two or three little personal things that I didn't want anyone to know about and certainly didn't want Jesus to see. I knew they were dead and rotting things left over from my old life. And yet I loved them, and I couldn't bring myself to part with them, so I was afraid to admit they were there.

Reluctantly, I went up with Him, and as we climbed the stairs the odor became stronger and stronger. He pointed at the door. "It's in there! Something dead!" I was angry. That's the only way I can put it. I had given Him access to the library, the dining room, the living room, the workroom, the rec room, and now He was asking me about a little two-by-four closet. I thought to myself, "This is too much. I've already given him access to everything else. I am not going to give Him the key." "Well," He said, reading my thoughts, "It doesn't belong here anymore now that I'm your guest. I came to make this place new, right? This thing belongs to your old heart. I died that you might be free of this. If you don't let go of this stuff, it's just going to create distance between us and eventually stink up the whole house. This stuff has got to go!"

Then I saw Him start down the stairs. When you have come to know and love Christ, the worst thing that can happen is to sense His fellowship retreating from you. I had to surrender. "I'll give You the key," I yelled out, "but You'll have to open the closet and clean it out. I don't have the strength to do it." He turned his head, "I know. I know you don't. That's what I'm here for. All you have to do is give me the key. Just authorize me to take care of that closet and I will."

So, with trembling fingers, I dropped the key in His hand. He walked over to the door, opened it, entered it, took out all the putrefying stuff that was rotting there, and threw it away. Then He cleaned the closet from top to bottom, painted it, and fixed it up. I can't tell you what a relief it was to have those dead things out of my life! It was like a weight lifted from my heart and I was freer than I thought was possible.

(Sometimes those dead things attempt to creep back into that closet, but I've learned that I need to keep passing that key over to Jesus and He'll take care of it, every time.)

Transferring the Title

Then a thought popped into my head. I said to myself, "I have been trying to keep this heart of mine clean for Christ. I start in one room and no sooner have I cleaned that then another room is dirty. I begin on the second room and the first room becomes dusty again. I'm so tired and weary of trying to maintain a clean heart and an obedient life. I'm just so over it!" So, I ventured a question: "Lord, is there any chance that You would take over the responsibility of the whole house and operate it for me and with me just as You did that closet? Would You take the responsibility to keep my heart and life the way you want it to be?" I could see His face light up as He replied, "Absolutely, that is what I came to do. You can't manage this place on your own strength, nor are you meant to. Let me do it through you and for you. But," He added, "I'm not the owner of this house. I'm just a guest. I don't have the authority to proceed since the property isn't mine."

Dropping to my knees, I said, "Lord, You have been a guest and I have been the host. From now on I'm going to be a servant and you're going to be the Owner and Master and Lord of it all." Running as fast as I could to the lockbox, I took out the deed to the house describing its assets and liabilities, location, situation, and condition. I eagerly signed it over to belong to Him alone for time and eternity.

"Here," I said. "Here it is! Here is everything. All that I am and have forever is yours. Now You run the house. I'll remain with You as a servant and friend." He took the deed to my life that day and I give you my word, my heart is infinitely better in the hands of its Maker. Don't get me wrong, it's not perfect, but it is a work in progress. And it is a beautiful one!

May Christ settle down and be at home in your heart as Lord of all!



Questions for reflection:

1. The first step in making Christ at home is your heart is to invite Him in. Jesus, in Revelation 3:20 says, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.” Have you opened the front door to let Him in? If not, what is holding you back?
2. If you have invited Jesus in, how are you becoming more of your true self with Him there? How are your delights and desires shifting?
3. Imagine yourself walking through these different rooms with Jesus. Which rooms have you yet to give Him access? What about those places makes it difficult to let Jesus in?

4. Are there any additional rooms that are in the home of your heart? What are they and how are you experiencing Christ in them?

5. Do you spend time regularly with Jesus? What differences do you notice in yourself in times when you do versus times when you don't?

6. If Jesus sat down for a meal in your kitchen, what are the things you would try to serve Him? Does it reflect the abundant life that Jesus promises us when we come to Him for our sustenance? If it doesn't, what is Jesus offering to replace it with?

7. What closets exist in your heart that you are hesitant to show Jesus and let Him clean? What step do you need to take to let Him do His work there?

8. What do you think about Jesus wanting to go wherever you go? How are you aware of His presence in your social activities? Does this awareness change how you spend your time and how you act?

9. What are you creating in the workroom of your heart? Is there something more Jesus wants to do through you? What holds you back from fully opening your hands to allow the Spirit to do new things?

10. Is Jesus a guest, roommate or the owner of your heart? What does it look like to have Jesus reside in your heart as the Creator, Lord, and Owner of your life?