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Presentation Transcript
Law of Attraction
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Here it is the first day of May and it snowed yesterday in Albuquerque! Can you believe that? That's a first – I think, the coldest last day of April in recorded history – so much for global warming!

The title of today's message is *The Law of Attraction*. I've talked about this topic under many different names over the years. And I chose to talk about it under the title, *Law of Attraction*, because that's what it has become to be called recently, and also because one of the organized churches of God has recently branded this topic as heretical. So now it's controversial in our little circle. And because it's forbidden, it's also, therefore, deliciously more interesting.

The law of attraction has been around for a long, long time – actually since the creation of the universe. Different people have called it different things over the ages. In Eastern thought it is called *kharma*. In the Bible it's called the law of sowing and reaping. In the modern vernacular it's called "what goes around comes around." In the past, some of the titles I've applied to the topic are *Godly Love*, *Fruits of the Spirit* and *How To Be Blessed*.

So what is the law of attraction? Well, the idea is that we tend to attract to ourselves what we are. And the implication is, by changing self, we can transform our situation.

So is that the way you think about things? Or do you think that you have wait until the Kingdom comes before you're going to be different? See, there are a lot of implications here that are rather subtle. And the reason I'm talking about it – from LifeResource Ministries – is to point up a need in the lives of Church of God Christians that inhibits their ability to raise Godly children.

Let's start out with a fallacy: If you obey God, that's all you need. It all flows from there. Let's define obeying God. Keeping the Sabbath. Keeping the holy days. Paying tithes. Being active at church. "I fast twice a week and give tithes of all I possess. I thank you, Father, that I am not like other men." See, Jesus pointed out that these kinds of activities

– He pointed to them – and said that it’s *not enough*. It’s not that we’re not supposed to do those things. It’s just that they’re not enough.

You know, I’ve noticed over the years that many people who are doing everything right – active at church, model members – are not happy. They’re not blessed in their work. Sometimes they’re not blessed in their families, not blessed in their finances, not blessed in their marriage. And they ask, “What am I doing wrong? I’m doing everything I know to do? I’ve tried all that stuff that the church teaches me, so why am I not happy? Why aren’t things working?” Well, I think we’re missing something.

Let’s go to Galatians 5, verse 22.

Gal. 5:22 – *The fruit of the Spirit is love* – that word is *agape* – agapic love – that is, the love of God. It’s an emotion. It’s not a rule. It’s an *emotion*. And all these other fruits of the Spirit that follow – joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control – are all emotions or states of being that undergird and support that agapic love.

So all the fruits of the Spirit are emotions or states of being. There’s not a single rule there that is a fruit of the Spirit! No obedience or rules-following. Sabbath-keeping is not listed. Why not? Well, I think that Sabbath-keeping is a fruit of the Spirit. That’s what I believe. So why isn’t it on the list? Well, I think, if we can understand why, then we’re on our way to transformation.

I don’t think that God is really interested in our pitiful attempts to obey Him. I mean, He said that our righteousness is like filthy rags. We are *not* good at anything God asks us to do. But He is interested in our hearts. And He wants us to become loving people. And if we do *that*, then all that other stuff – all the rules – all that is just going to take care of itself. We won’t even have to worry about it.

Was that a heretical idea I just marched out there? That if we become loving people, the rest will take care of itself?

Gal. 5:14 – *The entire law – the entire law – is summed up in a single commandment – love your neighbor as yourself.* And then notice what he says in the next breath. *If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out, or you will be destroyed by each other.*

So the entire law – the Sabbath, the holy days, everything that goes along with church, all our traditions – those are all summed up in *love your neighbor as yourself*. And if we’re not able to do *that*, then what’s going to happen? We’re going to bite and devour each other. That’s an unintended consequence of rules-keeping *without* spirituality.

I’m thinking about groups I’ve been in, where people bit and devoured each other. It happens, doesn’t it? I was in the ministry of Sabbatarian churches for quite awhile. And the ministry, in our tradition, has always been heavy on moralizing, on control, on

correctness, on doing what's right. But it leaves off the relational qualities of love – like the fruits of the Spirit – gentleness, compassion and joy. You didn't have to do those things to be a good minister. You just had to keep things under control. It's the gentleness and the compassion and the joy that *inspires* people to *be* good people – not the control stuff. Ministry, generally, has become the arbitration of right behavior and the guarding of doctrinal purity and tradition. So what you've got is, the love of God has been stripped out of it, and only the rules-keeping remains. So there's been a divorce of the spiritual from the physical. It's kind of interesting, isn't it, what happens when you do that. So there are some unintended consequences. Who uses that term? I hear that all the time now – unintended consequences of our religious practices – the way we've done it over the years.

Religious practices – when you strip out the spirituality from the practice – becomes soothing routines to take our minds off the pain of lifelong unresolved issues. And as we judge our success as Christians on pious actions, the goal becomes to conceal or deflect attention away from what's broken and what's not working. We don't want other people to know that we're having problems.

Consider these commonly heard statements: “He made me mad.” “She hurt my feelings.” “He got me pregnant.” I mean, you can just go on and on, can't you? We always tend to want to push this off onto somebody else. And this attempt to conceal or divert is the *opposite* of a healthy openness to the healing work of the Holy Spirit.

Becoming like God means doing the *internal* work that brings a human mind and heart into right alignment with the heart and mind of God – not ignoring it, not hiding it and not hiding from it. That's what God wants us to do. He wants us to *think* like He thinks and *feel* like He feels. It's only when we're willing to work *through* the hurts of the past that God moves into our lives and leaves us with increasing joy and peace. I'm going to say that again. It's only when we're willing to work *through* the hurts of the past that God moves into our lives and leaves us with increasing joy and peace.

The New Testament clearly states that *heartfelt* love, not perfect obedience, does three things. One, it summarizes the entire Bible. Two, it fulfills the law. And three, it's the authentic proof of our discipleship to Christ and our relationship with God. Heartfelt love is the proof of that – not perfect obedience.

Okay, let's look at the application. Reap what we sow. Right? If we go around with unresolved anger and hurt inside of us, it spews out on others from time to time. I know somebody that teaches a parenting program – *Parenting with Love and Logic*. And I have sort of a cavalcade of people coming through my office that are trying to learn that way of parenting. I coach them. And many of them are not able to do it, because it is a program that requires you *not* to be angry when you discipline your kids. If you do, you completely take away from them the opportunity to learn the lesson, because they're thinking, “What a jerk my parent is because he's always mad at me!” instead of thinking about what I did that is causing me problems.

So why do people have problems being calm with their kids? Well, because kids tend to bring up stuff that happened to us when *we* were children that makes us angry. So we can't parent from a Godly perspective because of what has happened to us in the past.

Now, does that sound to you like I'm blaming parents? Or the parents of the parents? I'm not, really, because parents all do things inadvertently that aren't good for their kids. But once their kids grow up, they can't go back and undo that. Only the one who has been hurt can do it. We're all responsible to take care of our own tasks – not someone else's.

So, our own unresolved hurts and anger spew out on others from time to time – sometimes our kids, sometimes on others. And, if we sow that, then we're going to reap it. We *attract* that back to ourselves.

Heartfelt goes around and comes around, too, however. It's not just the bad stuff. It's the *good* stuff. So it's possible to transform our lives by becoming attractors of the love of God. We do that by becoming radiators of the love of God – shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. And that happens when we start focusing on our internal state – the hurts and the losses that keep us from being Godly.

Hurts and losses. How do losses and past wounds keep us from being Godly? Well, underneath all anger, underneath all jealousy, all fruits of the flesh are losses and wounds. If we read the book of Job, we see that in order to draw us closer to Him, God allows us to suffer losses. Job lost his wealth, his status and even his children. And the book is about how, instead of becoming a faithless bitter man, Job resolved those losses and grew closer to God by talking his way through them, instead of stuffing it all. And because he was willing to dig into his feelings and to encounter God, the Spirit of God could move *in* him and move him closer to God – which we know is what happened in the end.

It's hard to forgive someone who has done us wrong until we let go of the hurt that is underneath all the pain. It's hard to radiate godliness when we have a large backlog of unforgiven wounds in our life. No amount of Sabbath-keeping helps that. If we're going to keep that part of our life away from God, and not let Him into that, then we will suffer the consequences of it.

So we need to quit trying to feel good by obeying and focus on the state of our heart. That's what the Bible tells us to do. Let's look at some examples of how that might work.

A lady came to me one time – when I was a minister – and she said, “I have a bad attitude because my husband won't treat me right.” So at least she was willing to admit that she had a bad attitude. But she was laying the blame for her bad attitude on *him*! And I said, “Well, how are you expressing your bad attitude toward him?” She said, “Temper tantrums, the silent treatment, complaining about him to the family, and locking him out of the bedroom.” I said, “I'm not sure your strategy is going to get you what you want. If he wasn't treating you badly before all this, he certainly will now!” (I remember something...I forget the name of the person that said this, but it was said, “I'm responsible for my pain, but only *all* of it.”) So, with this lady – as with all counselings – we began

with what *she* could change. She started standing up for herself, instead of all this passive-aggressive punishment, and direct communication of her expectations. So that was the best chance that she had to transform her marriage. But she was unable to stop that destructive behavior at first. And we found out it was because her husband reminded her of her father. They say women marry their fathers. So, if he's a good guy that's a good thing, but if not, it's worse. So, she had anger for her father and it was being triggered by her husband. Once she saw that and did the work about her father, then she was able to stand up to her husband without anger. And since she changed, he changed. So she started reflecting the love of God instead of her own woundedness to him.

Another example: Once I had a lady come to my practice and it was hard for me to look at her – not because she was bad-looking, but because she was so unhappy-looking – so negative. You just looked at her and knew she was *not* having a good time. I took a history and there were lots of things in her life that were unhappy but not traumatic. She came from an intact family. She was never abused in any way. But every time we would come to one of the problems she had as a child, or in college, or in high school, I would ask her, on a scale of zero to ten, how upsetting each event was, and they were *all* sevens, eights, nines or tens – even minor things from long ago seemed upsetting to her when she thought about them. She'd never processed any of it and it was making her really unhappy. It caused her to lose a series of jobs. She lost relationships. It was a sad thing to see. But, at least, she came for help and she knew that she could get over it if she had somebody to help her.

I think about some of us in the church. We think that going to church is going to fix our problems – if we keep the Sabbath well enough, or we go to the Feast every year, pay our tithes, help at church. Somehow that's magically going to transform our lives or we're just going to have to suffer along with that until the Kingdom comes. This lady was hoping for a transformation and so should we. That's what God wants. He doesn't want us to be miserable until the Kingdom comes. He wants us to be happy. God tells us we can put on a new person from which the love of God can be shed abroad to the world. And that's supposed to draw other people to Him. So this lady came hoping for transformation and she found it.

Here's another example. I had a boy in my office some time back that was fourteen. He got into so many fights and he hurt so many people that, if he had one more incident on his record, he was going to go to prison. They were going to send him to Springer. He said, "I think there's something wrong with me." And I said, "Well, what do you think that is?" He said, "I think something is wrong with my heart maybe. I don't know, but I just get so angry for no good reason." And I said, "You know, they sent you here for anger management. Do you think that's going to work?" He said, "I hope so, but I get angry so fast there is no time to do anything." So I said, "You don't really think it's going to work." He said, "I don't think so." I said, "Well, I think we can do better than anger management. I think I can help you get rid of that anger." He said, "Can you really do that?" I said, "Well, I've helped others, so, if I can help them, why can't I help you?" He said, "Okay." I said, "I'll tell you, though, the only reason those people got rid of their anger was because they were willing to come here every week and think about things that

were really hard to think about. They had to do the *work*. I just showed them what to do. But *they* were the ones that did the work. And that's how it's going to be with you. So, if you're able to do that, then, together, we can get rid of your anger. And if not, then, according to what you tell me, it's probably off to jail for you at some point."

With teenage boys, especially, you really have to hold their feet to the fire, because they *hate* to think about their feelings. Talking about them is even worse. Well, he hasn't missed a session and things are going good for him. He's exploring his own heart. He's understanding why he gets angry and what has happened in his past to cause him to be that way. And he's processing all of that stuff and letting go of the hurt so that he's not going to be triggered by those things any longer. I wasn't sure when I first met him, but I really think that he has an excellent chance of living a normal adult life and not becoming a criminal. We're both hoping for a transformation in his life. And so should all of us.

Another example: I knew a man once. He was a contractor. He was a very good man. Everybody would like him. He was very active at church. He had a big family. They were all nice kids. He used to build houses as a sub-contractor for a larger builder. He built some of the best houses in town, because the larger builder had a really good ability to pick what people wanted and good house plans and all. So he watched what the larger builder did and decided to try it on his own. So, since he had a large family, he was partial to houses with lots of bedrooms. A good house meant bedrooms to him. So he borrowed money, picked a house plan and built a large, well-built home. But, because it was so big, it took longer than he expected and he ran out of cash. He had to borrow from the housing loan to feed his family while he was building the house. So he ran out of money before he was done. So now he had no rent money and he had to move into the house that he wasn't finished building yet. Well, his kids quickly wore the new off of that house. And it took him months more to come up with the money to finish it. So perspective buyers would come and look at it. It wasn't new and nobody needed six bedrooms. So not long afterwards, I heard him talking about how fickle the market was. See? It all seemed good in the beginning to him, but he was overbuilt and undercapitalized.

I don't know if he ever really analyzed what happened, but he was liable to either give up or keeping make the same mistakes, unless he goes inside himself and figures out what he did wrong and why. It's interesting to consider that he came from a background of poverty. So this was the first *new* house that he'd ever had a chance to live in. And while he wanted things others had, he didn't really feel capable of having them. And so, I think, his internal feeling came back to him in his work and affected his judgment. Now, he was a very kind person and a fine man, and he did all the obedience things, but he had never really come to terms with what was driving him from his painful childhood.

One more example, okay? Do you remember where Jesus told the Jews in Galilee – His neighbors – that there was never a prophet that had any honor in his own country? And Elijah – there were plenty of starving widows in Israel, but he had to go to Sidon to provide food for a widow, because none of the Israelites had the faith. He told, at the same time, about Elisha – there were plenty of lepers in Israel he could have healed, but

he couldn't heal any of them. He had to go to Naaman, the Syrian commander – to a Gentile – and He found faith there.

So let's think about all those people in Israel that couldn't be healed and couldn't be saved from the famine. They didn't have faith. And that came back around to them, didn't it? Naaman, the leper, did and that came back around to him. And the Sidonian widow lady...she had faith. And that came back around to her. So we're talking about faith in God, aren't we? Remember all the things Jesus said about healing? How, if we had just the tiniest bit of faith – like a mustard seed – you could move a mountain? See, what we're talking about here is getting *aligned* with God with the way God thinks.

This principle is how God takes care of us. Jesus said, "Ask and it will be given you. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened. For everyone who asks receives, he who seeks finds, and him who knocks, the door will be opened." Of course, if you don't think you're going to get anything good, then you won't do any of those things, will you? "Which of you, if your son asks you for bread, will give him a stone, or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake. If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him. So, in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you. For this sums up the law and the prophets."

This is how God blesses us. Does God sit in heaven, watching us all, and meting out to us what we deserve? Well, we know that He does that sometimes. He did that with Job. He did that with Paul. He did that with David. But I think He's way smarter than we give Him credit for. He has also created a physical universe that operates *automatically* according to His principles.

You know, there is some exciting stuff in quantum physics that might apply. I don't have time to talk about all that today – and I'm probably the last one that should be talking about quantum physics anyway. But all matter is energy. All energy vibrates, but at different rates. That which vibrates at the same rate attracts the same thing. That's kind of what I take from it. I don't feel bad about not knowing about quantum physics, because even quantum physicists can't explain it. Most of them are reduced to blathering when they try to explain how it works. But there is an entire creation designed to give back to us what we give out. And that means that, if we think like God thinks and get atuned to Him, good things are supposed to come back to us. That's what He wants.

It's a training system. It's a way to teach us automatically. I don't know how He does it. I just know that He does. And what that means for us is, that we can change ourselves. And if we do that, our world is going to change with us.

Many of us have locked ourselves into future-thinking. "I'm helpless now. I can't do anything about my problems. I'm just going to have to suffer along. I can't change. I can't be happy. But when Jesus returns, I'll be resurrected and *then* it will be good." That's not what God wants for us. All we have to do to change our life is partner with

God to change our heart. That's basically, for Christians, what the law of attraction means.

To close, let me ask you this question. After you have done all the obeying – all the Sabbath-keeping, all the holy day observing, all the tithing – what is it that you lack in your life? What is it that you want? Well, if it's good for you, you can have that. To use Jesus' own words, He said, "A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you used, it will be measured to you."