

I Must Be About My Father's Business

Volume VI

Perfect Love

The Highest Law and Strongest force

1 John 4:18

**There is no fear in love,
but perfect love casteth out fear.
*(Creating an atmosphere for faith to work)***

1 John 4:12

**If we love one another, God
dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.**

1 Corinthians 13:13

**Three things will last forever: faith,
hope, and love -- and the greatest of these is love.**

James A. Twentier

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Unless otherwise identified, Scripture quotations are from the King James Version. Scriptures included from other Bible versions are indicated as follows:

AMP - Amplified Bible
NLT - New Living Translation
TLB - The Living Bible
GNT - Good News Translation
NIV - New International Version
NKJV - New King James Version
MSG - THE MESSAGE: The Bible in Contemporary
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PC STUDY BIBLE from BIBLESOFT was used as the source for all Scripture references and Bible commentaries.

Please note that the emphasis within Scripture is the author's own. The name satan and related names are not capitalized because we choose not to acknowledge him.

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Purpose and Scope

The primary purpose and scope of this book is directed and driven by two of the greatest foundational biblical principles and challenges for spiritual growth of the Christian:

(1) The greatest commandment is to love God and others:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second most important is similar: Love your neighbor as much as you love yourself. All the other commandments and all the demands of the prophets stem from these two laws and are fulfilled if you obey them. Keep only these and you will find that you are obeying all the others” (Matt. 22:37-40). TLB

(2) The command to grow and increase in the love of God:

*“That ye, being **rooted and grounded in love**, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph. 3:17-19).*

*“And may the Lord make you to **increase and excel and overflow in love** for one another and for all people” (1 Thess. 3:12). AMP*

PERFECT LOVE -- THE HIGHEST LAW AND STRONGEST FORCE

*“But concerning the pure brotherly love that there should be among God's people . . . Indeed, your love is already strong toward all the Christian brothers. Even so, dear friends, we beg you to **love them more and more**” (1 Thess. 4:9-10).*

*“My prayer for you is that you **will overflow more and more with love for others**, and at the same time keep on growing in spiritual knowledge and insight” (Phil. 1:9). TLB*

To address these two foundational principles and challenges, we will review some of the attributes and effects of God's divine love and affirm that:

(1) Love is the only motive accepted by God for working in His Kingdom: *“Though I have all spiritual gifts . . . give all my goods to the poor . . . give my body to be burned, and have not love, it is nothing” (1 Cor. 13:1-3).*

(2) The source of God's perfect love is the Spirit. It is produced by the Spirit: *“The fruit of the Spirit is **love**, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”* Therefore the only way to have more of God's divine love (agape love) is to be emptied of self and filled with His Spirit, allowing it to change and control us: *“Be filled with the Holy Spirit and controlled by Him” (Eph. 5:18). TLB*

(3) Love is the key element required to produce the humility and unity essential for evangelism and miracles, like the first century Church in the book of Acts, that shook their known world.

In this study we will review and examine some of the:

- Hindrances that obstruct the flow of God's love.
- Principles that promote and increase the growth of God's love.

Purpose and Scope

- Amazing benefits and results of God's perfect love flowing and working in our lives. Some of these include: humility, unity, forgiveness, peace, reconciliation of relationships, love for our neighbor, our enemy and, especially, the brotherhood.

A significant emphasis is placed on love for the brotherhood (the body of Christ) since:

- Loving God and loving our brother in Christ are completely and indivisibly linked, because we are members of one body.
- Our love for God is manifested and measured by our love for our brother.
- Our heavenly Father elevates His Church, His Bride, above all others: *"Now you are no longer strangers to God and foreigners to heaven, but you are members of God's very own family, citizens of God's country, and you belong in God's household with every other Christian"* (Eph. 2:19). TLB
- The Word of God demands a special love and treatment for those in the household of faith:

*As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, **especially unto them who are of the household of faith*** (Gal. 6:10).

*Show respect for all men [treat them honorably]. **Love the brotherhood** (the Christian fraternity of which Christ is the Head). Reverence God. Honor the emperor (1 Peter 2:17). AMP*

Note: Regarding the volume of Scripture text included in this book

Many Scriptures regarding love and related subjects of humility and unity are intentionally included in this book:

- (1) For maximum impact, because no amount of commentary by an author can match the hammering effect of the infallible, immutable, and eternal Word of God.
- (2) Some of these concepts appear very brutal to the natural man (*who must die for Christ to live*), and are best described with Scripture supporting Scripture (line upon line, precept upon precept).
- (3) Some readers may never take the time to research and connect all of the numerous related Scriptures. This would be very difficult without a robust computer Bible software package that has powerful search engines.

Bible Commentaries and Book References

I am a student of the subjects presented here and have used many references to Bible commentaries and other authors to corroborate and validate my findings in this challenging thesis.

Preface

The Call to Write This Book

During a month long mission's trip to Spain in October 2012, I was preparing a sermon for the Sunday service entitled, "Reaching a Changing World with an Unchanging Gospel". After several hours I completed the final changes and thought I was finished with my studies.

While reviewing the final point of the message regarding "unity", I was strongly arrested by the Spirit of God. God was speaking into my spirit to study further: **"What creates or hinders unity and harmony among the diverse believers in the body of Christ?"** I spent a few more hours researching Scriptures and making changes to the message. As I drilled down to a deeper level in the Word, I began to understand for there to be **unity** in the body of Christ, there must be **humility** among the brotherhood. For there to be genuine **humility**, there must be God's **perfect love** flowing in the brotherhood. Refer to Chart N-4, "Perfect Love is the Foundation for Humility and Unity", in Appendix 1.

In addition to other related subjects, this book highlights these three key elements manifest at the birth of the Church which are necessary to produce another Pentecost:

(1) First, the **perfect love** of God flowing in the body of Christ: *“I demand that you love each other as much as I love you” (John 15:12). “If we love one another, his love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:12).* This encompasses how we treat our brothers in Christ and reconcile relationship differences. This is discussed in Chapters 3, 4, 5, 8 and 9.

(2) **Humility** treats the members in the body of Christ better than oneself -- creating an atmosphere conducive to cooperation and unity: *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves” (Phil. 2:3). NIV* This is discussed in Chapter 6.

(3) **Unity** creates harmony in the interaction between the diverse members in the body of Christ (unity with diversity like the members of a natural body). Jesus’ last prayer with His disciples before He went to the cross was for them to be **one** in unity: *“Father, keep in Your Name those whom You have given Me, that they may be **one** as We are **one**. Neither for these alone do I pray, but also for all those who will ever come to believe in (trust in, rely on) Me through their word and teaching, they may become **one** and **perfectly united**, that the world may know and recognize that You sent Me and that You have loved them, as You have loved Me” (John 17:11, 20-23). AMP* This is discussed in Chapter 7.

My study of **“perfect love”** took me to many Scripture references including the letter to the Church of Ephesus in Revelation, Chapter 2, where God commended them for many great qualities, but then identified one serious fault: “You have

left your **first love**.” The fault was so serious that God told them, “If you do not repent and do your first works, I will remove your candlestick”. And if God will take away our light simply because we do not love Him and others as we should, then it would be good to pause and take a deeper look into the message to the Church of Ephesus -- the message of, **“first love”**.

Something had happened to the church in the few years since Pentecost, when the overwhelming, overarching atmosphere of the book of Acts Church was, ***one mind and one accord***” unity that brought explosive evangelism and church growth. Something had been lost. It was not their doctrine, their love for the truth, their patience or hard work. Simply, there was a flaw in their love for God and each other -- which are interlocking and inseparable: *“He who does not **love his brother**, whom he has seen, cannot **love God**, whom he has not seen.”*

Like the saints in the Church of Ephesus, we may be very secure in our doctrine, and faithful in our service to God. But we must make sure that we have the perfect love of God flowing through us to the brotherhood then to a lost world, including our enemies.

God’s message to me that day continues to speak to me. His Voice has not gone away; it has become stronger and louder. It has taken me deeper into prayer and the Word to search my heart and pursue a greater understanding, revelation and experience of God’s perfect love.

Since this book deals with a difficult subject (the most important and most challenging in all of Holy Writ), I feel unqualified to dare prepare this thesis. God’s love is so high,

so deep, so wide, so wonderful, so powerful and perfect. Our responsibility to flow it to others (in the measure in which it is received) is difficult to effectively describe with pen and ink. So why would I attempt to do this? First, God has challenged me to dig deeper into His Word for a greater understanding of His perfect love; secondly, to share it with others.

I have reviewed every Scripture in the Bible relating to love: God's love for us, our love for God, our love for the brotherhood, others and even our enemies. I also studied every Scripture regarding humility, unity and related concepts (forgiveness, reconciliation with a brother, etc.).

I always look for confirmation to ensure I am spending my time on something that is in God's perfect will. The first in a number of confirmations came the following week in Spain. I was in a coffee shop on the Rock of Gibraltar when I saw next to my table a small religious magazine entitled, "Upon This Rock". I was surprised because a religious magazine was out of place in this setting. The feature article discussed key elements of humility and love.

With the completion of this seventh and final book in this series, there is an indescribable feeling of a burden lifted from a message delivered. The initial call to write the first book in this series came during my preparation for a 2003 mission's trip to preach and teach in the churches and Bible schools in Barcelona and Madrid, Spain. And it seems surreal that the thesis for the seventh and final book of this series would again be born during a mission's trip to the same country a decade later.

These mission's trips to Spain and other countries have sharpened my awareness of the vast need for revival in Spain

Preface

and around the world. The answer to that challenge is portrayed in the title of this book: **“Perfect Love the Highest Law and Strongest Force.”** Nothing else will impact our world for Jesus Christ like the perfect love of God flowing through the body of Christ, the brotherhood, and then to the desperate needs of lost souls.

I had been praying for several years that God would help me love Him with the same wonderful love that He gives to me -- to love Him with His perfect love. And as I studied more deeply the vast subject of God’s love, His Word and His still small Voice has assured me that I can. By loving my brother with God’s perfect love, He receives it as my love to Him.

If this writing project does not benefit anyone else, it has been invaluable for my wife and me, in moving us to a deeper devotion in prayer and the Word. It has increased our awareness and understanding that we can make a greater difference in the harvest field if we will embrace and exhibit the beautiful and wonderful concepts of God’s perfect love.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to those striving for the Kingdom and desperate for the unity in the brotherhood that ignited revival and evangelism in the first century Church. It is dedicated to those who will embrace the principles of “perfect love” and pursue the brutal path of self-demotion and humility required to produce the spirit of unity essential for another Pentecost.

The definition, description and foundation of the highest law and strongest force in the Kingdom (**perfect love**) is from the greatest and most challenging Book in the universe -- the incredible, immutable, infallible, supernatural and eternal Word of God.

May this book bless and assist you in pursuing a more in-depth study of this subject. And as you allow the Spirit, through prayer, to illuminate truth, may revelation of the Word move you beyond the informational to the transformational.

Acknowledgments

I'd like to say a heartfelt thank you to the following people:

To my faithful wife of 48 years, Marsha Gail, for her help and encouragement in pursuing the completion of this challenging seven volume project.

The late Bishop James L. Kilgore, whose ministry, influence and encouragement supported and challenged me for five decades.

Joyce Houlette for assisting with her review and editing expertise.

Roland Ramos for painting the book cover scene.

Many friends who offered their support and encouragement.

Author's Note

The theme of **love** was included and emphasized in various ways in the previous volumes of the series, **“I Must Be About My Father's Business”** as shown on the following page. However, the extreme importance of God's perfect love, the highest law and strongest force in the Kingdom of God, demands a separate thesis to explore its principles and challenges at a greater depth.

PERFECT LOVE -- THE HIGHEST LAW AND STRONGEST FORCE

Volume	Aspect of Love Emphasized in Each Volume
I	Relationship between God and Man: God loving man and man loving God and his brother. Refer to Charts A-2, A-12, in Appendix 1.
II	Dominion - Doing God's Will and Work: Love for God is the foundation for obedience which includes not only saying "no" to satan and sin, but "yes" to God's perfect will for our lives. Charity is love in action to someone in need. Refer to Chart B-1a, in Appendix 1.
III	The soul is made up of the will, the mind and the emotions. Man's emotions have a limited capacity for loving others and must be replaced by God's perfect love that can love even our enemies. Refer to Chart D-5 and D-5a in Appendix 1. Refer to the Addendum Volume for Charts: D-1 - D-4.
IV	Partnering with God in the supernatural includes exercising the spiritual gifts described in 1 Cor. Chapter 12. But these gifts are meaningless and useless without love described in 1 Cor. Chapter 13. Refer to Charts G-8 and G-22, in Appendix 1.
V	Love has two components: Compassion: Deep sympathy accompanied with a strong urge to help. Action: Feeling great responsibility for the welfare of someone to the extent that action will be taken to improve their welfare. Refer to Chart G-26, in Appendix 1.
Addendum PowerPoint Charts	PowerPoint Charts regarding love: F-5, 6, G-7, 9, 10, 12, 24, 25, J-2, 13, 23, 25, 27, 34, K-1, 2, 2b, 6 - 9. Refer to Appendix 1 for Charts: C-15, 19, G-8, 22, 23, 23a, 26, 27, N1 - N-7, N9.

I Must Be About My Father's Business **Seven Volume Progressive Series**



The message of "Perfect Love" in Volume 6 is essential for the themes in the other five volumes to work effectively. The Addendum Volume contains the 8.5 X 11 copies of the PowerPoint Charts supporting the themes presented in the above six volumes.

The project of writing this seven volume progressive series of books was very challenging in both scope and content.

This first edition of this seven book series is a work in progress and is by no means a complete exegesis on the subjects discussed. It is only a summary of themes that God has dealt with me regarding these inexhaustible subjects. It is my thesis and collection of findings at this point in my Christian experience from:

- Several thousand hours studying various themes and subjects related to God's purpose and will for man, the restoration of the Church (partnering with God in the supernatural), passion for God (revival), compassion for the lost (evangelism), the endtime harvest (urgency of the times).
- A theme that began as a slice of bread from the Word of God, the Bread of Life. As my studies continued, it became a loaf of bread, and another, and another. As many of these themes came together, it became a bread truck, an overwhelming burden driving through my spirit, soul and mind that had to be delivered.
- Many years of trying to apply these principles in my life and ministry. I have not attained all that I should in His work and Kingdom, but I am reaching and striving for more.
- A direction and burden from God accompanied by an urgency to complete this project. This is comparable to the burden of a message waiting to be preached. However, this feeling has persisted throughout many years of study and preparation.

Author's Note

The Word of God is like a hammer -- one that has worn out many anvils throughout time without becoming weakened or diminished in its effectiveness. I pray that God will hammer these messages and themes into your spirit like He has mine.

Jeremiah 23:29 Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?

This seven book series is a product of hearing several thousand messages, studying the greatest Book, the Bible, and from many other sources of great writers over the past 50 years. I have tried to give proper credit to sources. If I have overlooked someone or something, it is unintentional and only an indication that their individual work has blended into the larger themes of this ten year, 10,000 hour, 2,200 published page project.

Your comments for changes and additions to the content of these books are welcomed and will be considered for future revisions. God bless and multiply your harvest as we labor together with Him.

I.

**Perfect Love the Highest
Law and Strongest force in
the Kingdom of God**

Perfect love is still required to create the atmosphere of humility demanded for the "one mind and one accord" unity evident at the miraculous birth of the first century Church.

** * * * **

Just as oxygen is the key element in our natural ecosystem for us to live, perfect love is the key element in God's ecosystem for the spiritual man to grow and be productive.

1. *Introduction*

Every living thing is sustained by three functions: **input**, **process** and **output**. Even a computer program is defined by these three basic processes. Likewise, the spiritual growth and maturity of a Christian revolves around these three processes redefined as: **relationship**, **transformation**, and **dominion**.

Relationship involves God and man sharing a **mutual interaction of love**, communication, and trust. Refer to Charts A-2 and A-12 in Appendix 1 for a high-level overview.

Transformation involves continuous change: less of my will and more of God's will; less of my mind and more of God's mind; less of my limited human love and **more of God's perfect agape love**. It involves dominion over self (the soul: will, mind and emotions) -- "*He must increase and I must decrease.*" Refer to Charts D-5, D-5a and F-1 in Appendix 1.

Dominion is God sharing His authority and power with man to fulfill His will and work on earth as we are **directed and driven by His perfect love**. This involves dominion over satan and sickness working as a son of God in the harvest field and battlefield. Refer to Charts B-1a and C-15 in Appendix 1.

PERFECT LOVE -- THE HIGHEST LAW AND STRONGEST FORCE

Every concept in the Bible that pertains to Christian living and service relates to at least one of these three key themes. These biblical concepts should be repeated in a continuous cycle in our lives as we mature and become more like our heavenly Father. Also a balanced prayer life will include these three concepts (Chart E-2 in Appendix 1).

These three interrelated concepts work together in the ecosystem of God's Kingdom to bring spiritual maturity and fulfillment of God's purpose for our lives. Refer to Charts N-1 and N-3 in Appendix 1.

There is one key overarching theme woven into these three processes that is superior to every theme in the Bible. That is the perfect **L-O-V-E of God -- the highest law and strongest force in the Kingdom of God. The perfect love of God is the life flow in the body of Christ.**

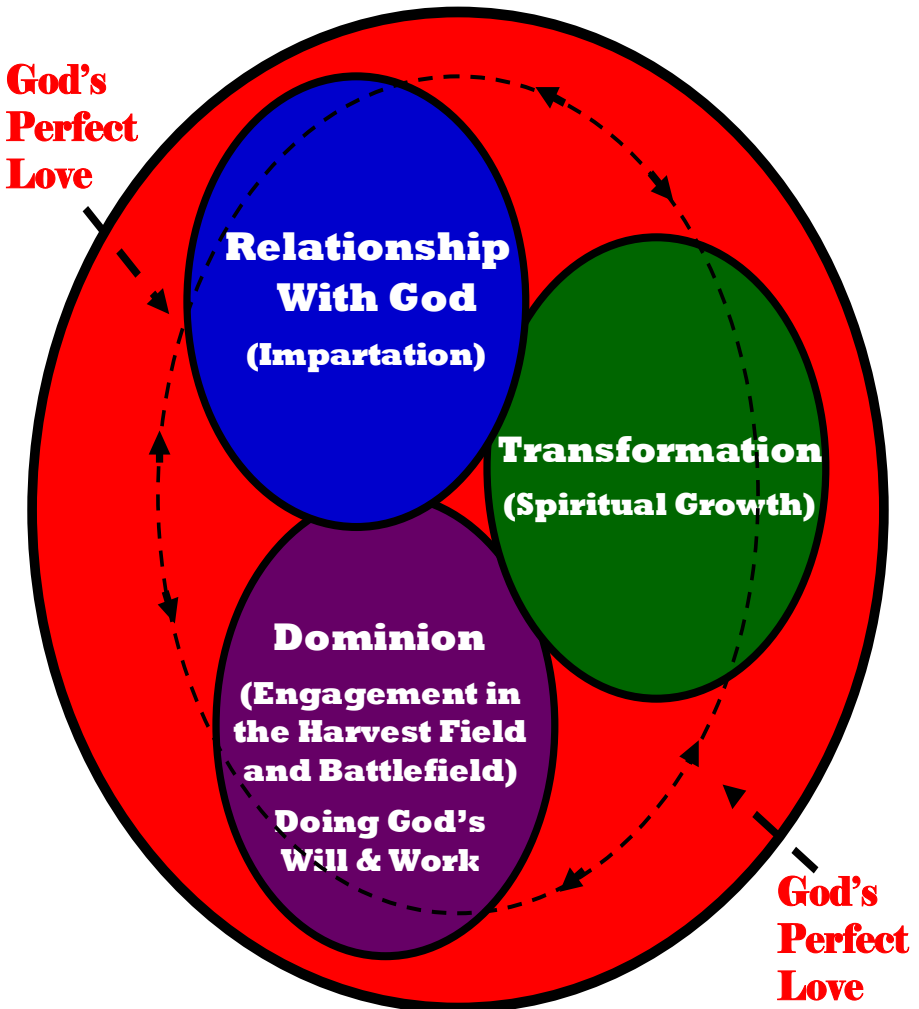
Just as oxygen is the key element in our natural ecosystem for us to live, perfect love is the key element in God's ecosystem for the spiritual man to grow and be productive. Refer to Chart N-2 on the next page.

Love is the only motive accepted by God for working in His Kingdom. It must be the basis for every Christian action to accomplish anything effective and lasting.

Chart N-2

The Ecosystem of God's Kingdom

Just as oxygen is the key element in our natural ecosystem for us to live, **PERFECT LOVE** is the key element in God's ecosystem for the spiritual man to grow and be productive. It is the key element and driving force in a growing relationship with God, transformation of the inner man and dominion in the harvest field.



God is love – in His perfect love we live and move and have our being!

PERFECT LOVE -- THE HIGHEST LAW AND STRONGEST FORCE

If we had only one word to describe God, it would be “**l-o-v-e**”. If we had only one word to describe the entire Bible, it would be “**l-o-v-e**” -- a love story of God’s love for mankind, a love letter to mankind.

The scarlet cord of love is woven throughout every book of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. God’s love is so beautiful and strong that it encompasses every person and every circumstance for man and God relationships:

- God’s love for everyone on earth.
- Our love for God.
 - Our love for the brotherhood (household of faith).
 - Our love for our neighbor (anyone in need).
 - Our love for our enemies.

Striving For Perfect Love

When we speak of perfect love or perfection, there is often a feeling that no one can attain this high standard. But, our God is perfect and He challenges His children to strive for perfection: “*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*” (Matt. 5:48).

Apostle Paul’s life is an example that we should follow in pressing toward the goal of perfection: “*I don’t mean to say that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me*” (Phil. 3:12). NLT

Other Scriptures challenge the born-again believer to strive for perfection:

Introduction

<i>Heb. 6:1</i>	<i>Let us go on unto perfection.</i>
<i>2 Cor. 7:1</i>	<i>Perfecting holiness in the fear of God.</i>
<i>Eph. 4:12</i>	<i>For the perfecting of the saints.</i>
<i>Col. 1:28</i>	<i>That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.</i>
<i>Col. 4:12</i>	<i>That ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.</i>
<i>James 1:4</i>	<i>Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.</i>
<i>1 Peter 5:10</i>	<i>After that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.</i>
<i>1 Thess. 3:10</i>	<i>Perfect that which is lacking in your faith.</i>
<i>2 Tim. 3:17</i>	<i>That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.</i>
<i>James 3:2</i>	<i>If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.</i>

Jesus Warns of Love Growing Cold

In the Olivet discourse recorded in *Matthew 24*, Jesus answered His disciples' question: "*What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*" The last sign listed and preceding His reference to the "abomination of desolation" was the sign of "love growing cold": "*Because iniquity shall abound, **the love of many shall wax cold.***"

This is speaking of Christians, because for love to grow cold, it must have been hot at a prior time.

May we prayerfully and seriously search our hearts and make the appropriate changes in our life to ensure that we are not included with the **many** Christians (the majority vs. the minority) whose love will grow cold in the perilous last days of the endtime.

Matt. 24:12

*12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of **many** shall wax cold.*

*12 Because of the increase of wickedness, **the love of most will grow cold.** NIV*

Many: NT:4118 4183 pleistos; the largest number or very large. KJV - very great, most.¹

God's perfect love in our life is something that should grow and increase in our lives. Our love for God is like a fire that, if intentionally tended will burn brighter, affecting people in need of a Savior. But like an unattended fire, its intensity will decrease and begin to grow lukewarm and cold.

When our ardent, agape love for Christ subsides:

- The Bible is neglected.
- Ministering to the needs of others cease.
- Selfishness replaces sacrifice and self-denial.
- Church attendance is neglected or becomes mechanical.
- Prayer becomes a form of survival (for self) instead of revival prayers (for the lost).
- Un-reconciled relationships within the brotherhood result in ill feelings, critical comments and isolation.
- Other priorities replace God as number one.

Apostle Paul emphasizes that we should continue to grow in love for one another.

1 Thess. 4:9-10

9 But concerning the pure brotherly love that there should be among God's people, I don't need to say very much, I'm sure! For God himself is teaching you to love one another.

*10 Indeed, your love is already strong toward all the Christian brothers throughout your whole nation. Even so, dear friends, we beg you to **love them more and more**. TLB*

2 Thess. 1:3

*Dear brothers and sisters, we can't help but thank God for you, because your faith is flourishing and **your love for one another is growing**. NLT*

Phil. 1:9

*My prayer for you is that you will **overflow more and more with love for others**. TLB*

Loving God With All Our Heart Includes Loving Our Brother

The term, “I love the Lord with all my heart” is probably the most misused and untrue statement in all of Christianity. Because the only way for this to be true, is to love our brother with all our heart: *“Esteeming him better than yourself” (Phil. 2:3).* Our love for God is manifested and measured by our love for the brotherhood: *“I demand that you love each other as much as I love you” (John 15:12).* TLB *“If we love one another, His love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:12).*

For the process of perfect love to grow and increase in our lives we must act upon the understanding that:

- We must humble ourselves, treating others better than ourselves. This is discussed in Chapter 6.
- True biblical forgiveness includes actions of reconciliation to restore broken relationships. This is discussed in Chapter 9.
- We have no rights -- we belong to Him: *“Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price.”* This is discussed in Chapter 2.7.
- If our relationship with our brother is not right, our relationship with our heavenly Father is not right. When we do anything to anyone or say anything good or bad about someone, God considers it as being done to Him. This is discussed in Chapter 8.

The importance of “loving one another” is emphasized by every New Testament writer.

Introduction

<i>Matthew</i>	<i>For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?</i>
<i>Mark</i>	<i>Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.</i>
<i>Luke</i>	<i>If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. NIV</i>
<i>John</i>	<p><i>By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.</i></p> <p><i>We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.</i></p> <p><i>If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.</i></p>
<i>Peter</i>	<i>Above all things have intense and unfailing love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins [forgives and disregards the offenses of others]. AMP</i>
<i>James</i>	<i>Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: "Love your neighbor as yourself." But if you favor some people over others, you are committing a sin. You are guilty of breaking the law. NLT</i>
<i>Paul</i>	<i>For the whole Law can be summed up in this one command: "Love others as you love yourself." TLB</i>

PERFECT LOVE -- THE HIGHEST LAW AND STRONGEST FORCE

Rick Warren said: "Learning to love God and others is to be our highest goal, our greatest aim, our first priority, our deepest aspiration, our strongest ambition, our constant focus, our passionate intention, and the dominant life value of our lives. The more we learn how to love authentically, the more like Jesus we become."

Love Is the Highest Law and the Strongest Force In the Kingdom of God

1 Cor. 13:13

*And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but **the greatest of these is charity.***

Mark 12:30-31

30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

*31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. **There is none other commandment greater than these.***

1. Perfect Love Casteth Out Fear

With the absence of fear, an atmosphere is created that allows faith and the miraculous to work unrestricted in our lives and churches.

1 John 4:17-18

*17 Herein is our **love made perfect**, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.*

*18 There is no fear in love; but **perfect love casteth out fear**: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

-- From The Bible Exposition Commentary

Two brand-new words come into John's vocabulary here: fear and torment. And this is written to believers! Is it possible that Christians can actually live in fear and torment? And the reason is that they are not growing in the love of God.

"For God hath not given us a spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7). We need not fear life or death, for we are being perfected in the love of God. An immature Christian is tossed between fear and love; a mature Christian rests in God's love.²

2. Perfect Love Comes From a Pure Heart

1 Tim. 1:5

*5 The purpose of my instruction is that all believers would be filled with **love that comes from a pure heart**, a clear conscience, and genuine faith. NLT*

*5 Whereas the object and purpose of our instruction and charge is love, which **springs from a pure heart** and a good (clear) conscience and sincere (unfeigned) faith. AMP*

3. Perfect Love is Greater Than Faith

1 Cor. 13:13

*Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the **greatest of these is love**. NLT*

Gal. 5:6

*For [if we are] in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but **only faith activated and energized and expressed and working through love**. AMP*

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Heb. 11:6

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Having experiential knowledge of God's love, brings complete confidence that God can do anything and all things: "Unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power [in the hands of love] that worketh in us" (Eph. 3:20).

4. Perfect Love Produces Obedience

Love is the oil that greases the wheels of obedience. Obedience to God's Word proves our love to Him. More than resisting evil and saying "no" to satan, obedience is saying "yes" to God's will and purpose for our lives. With proper love for God, we will be obedient to His will.

John 14:2

If you [really] love Me, you will keep (obey) My commands.
AMP

John 15:10

When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love.
NLT

2 Cor. 5:14

Christ's love has moved me to such extremes. His love has the first and last word in everything we do. MSG

5. Perfect Love is Greater Than Doctrine

Our world will be lost if they are not reached for Jesus Christ. They must receive the doctrinal truths of God's Word, but the Word of God is not meant to be argued or debated. First the bridge of love must be built from God to us -- then through us to them.

- **Love is the bridge over which truth is transported.**

To be effective, like Jesus Christ, our declaration of the gospel must be preceded by our love: *"We will **speak the truth in love**, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church" (Eph. 4:15).*

Refer to Chart G-22, "Love Is the Bridge Over Which Truth Is Transported", in Appendix 1.

Jesus commended the Church in Ephesus for their stand on the doctrine and other wonderful attributes. But He condemned them for their deficit in their love.

It is the love of God that brings us to the doctrine: *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).*

1 John 4:9

God showed how much he loved us by sending his only Son into this wicked world to bring to us eternal life through his death. TLB

1 John 4:19

So you see, our love for him comes as a result of his loving us first. TLB

6. God Places His Power in the Hands of Love

The nine gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:8-10) which produce the supernatural, operate and flow through the **love** channel and are nothing without **love**. Refer to Chart G-8, “The Gifts of the Spirit Flow Through the Charity Channel”, in Appendix 1.

1 Cor. 13:1-2

1 If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

2 If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing. NLT

7. Love Binds Us Together in Unity

Col. 3:14

*Above all, clothe yourselves with **love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.** NLT*

Eph. 4:15-16

*15 Let our lives lovingly express truth in all things. Enfolded in **love**, let us grow up in every way and in all things into Him Who is the Head, [even] Christ.*

*16 For because of Him the whole body (the church, in all its various parts), **closely joined and firmly knit together** by the joints and ligaments with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly [in all its functions], grows to full maturity, **building itself up in love.** AMP*

This is discussed in Chapter 7, “Unity the Key to Another Pentecost.”

8. Every Christian Principle is Some Form of Love:

- Faith is love -- leaning.
- Courage is love -- emboldened.
- Hope is love -- expecting.
- Sacrifice is love -- giving.
- Patience is love -- waiting.
- Burden is love -- interceding.
- Repentance is love -- grieving.
- Obedience is love -- submitting.
- Compassion is love -- ministering.³

Love in the First Century Church

Day of Pentecost -- there was a love that produced a humility and a unity (*one mind and one accord*) in the brotherhood resulting in:

- Birth of the Church with 3,000 converts.
- Fervent Revival – “*When they had prayed, the place was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.*”
- God directs apostles to cities beyond Jerusalem.
- Extreme Evangelism – house to house, miracles with power over satan and sickness.
- The gospel spread to the known world with signs and miracles: “*The Lord working with them confirming the word with signs following*” (Mark 16:20).

“By the space of two years; all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul” (Acts 19:10-11).

Church of Ephesus -- within a few years after Pentecost, this church had lost its first love:

- They were commended by God for their labor and work, loving and defending the truth of God's Word, patience and faithfulness.
- One thing was lacking: "*You don't love me or each other as you did at first!*" (Rev. 2:4) *NLT*
- Gravity of losing their "first love" -- God's warning: unless you repent your light will be turned into darkness: "*Repent or I will remove thy candlestick.*"

When we look closely at the Scriptures we will see that the only way we can really love God is to love others. This particularly includes our brother in the church, but should also extend to a sinner neighbor and even our enemy. This is discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 13.

Love in the Twenty-first Century Church

Perfect love is still required to create the atmosphere of humility demanded for the "*one mind and one accord*" unity evident at the miraculous birth of the first century Church.

To become a book of Acts Christian and Church, we must diligently pursue a greater revelation of the principles of perfect love and put them into practice. Only this course of action will create the humility and resulting "*one mind and one accord*" unity required to produce another Pentecost.

When:

- The **perfect love** of the Father flows uninhibited among the family of God,

- **Pure humility** flows in the brotherhood where we esteem others better than ourselves,
 - Brothers and sisters in the household of faith are working in **unity** and **harmony** for the greater cause,
- there will be an explosion of revival and evangelism like that experienced in the book of Acts.**

The Compass of the Kingdom

Since ancient times, the needle of the compass has always pointed north, being drawn by the earth's magnetic field. In the darkest night, in the deepest jungle, when it is impossible for someone to see their way, the compass needle gives direction -- pointing to the North Pole.

The home base for our direction in the Spirit is the perfect love of God. Our spiritual compass is not directed by the force of a magnetic field, but by the highest law and greatest force in the universe -- the perfect love of God.

2 Thess. 3:5

*And the Lord **direct your hearts into the love of God**, and into the patient waiting for Christ.*

-- From Adam Clarke's Commentary

[The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God.] The love of God is the grand motive and principle of obedience; this must occupy your hearts: the heart is irregular in all its workings; God alone, by his Spirit, can direct it into his love, and keep it right; give a proper direction to all its passions, and keep them in order, with regularity and purity.⁴

When we have lost our direction and start loving God and our fellow man, we are moving in the right direction. Only the perfect love of God, growing and flowing in our hearts, will allow us to reach our full potential of God's purpose and will for our lives.

Our spiritual compass does not point to the North Star but to the Bright and Morning Star -- and His perfect love. He has not changed since the beginning of time and He never will: *"In Him there is no variableness neither shadow of turning"* (James 1:17).

God's Final Kingdom on Earth of Peace and Love

At the end of the age when, *"The kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ"*, the world will no longer be ruled by the love of power but by the power of love -- God's perfect love.

The Old Testament prophets Isaiah and Micah describe that day -- the Millennial Kingdom when Jesus Christ, with His saints, rule the world in peace and love for 1,000 years.

Micah 4:3-4, Isa. 2:4

3 The Lord will mediate between peoples and will settle disputes between strong nations far away. They will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will no longer fight against nation, nor train for war anymore.

4 Everyone will live in peace and prosperity, for there will be nothing to fear. NLT

- **In this prophecy of the Millennial Age, we see the will of our heavenly Father for His children to live in peace and love.**

What a wonderful time here on earth when Jesus Christ rules the world for 1,000 years with peace and perfect love. Until then, God is walking the earth incarnate in us and may the world feel the perfect love of Christ flowing from our lives.

The following chapters are dedicated to the pursuit of a greater revelation and experience of God's **perfect love** and the related concepts of **humility** and **unity** evident at the birth of the first century Church.

*May it never be true that we love Jesus Christ
less because we have more possessions.*

** * * * **

*May it never be true that we are more dedicated to
the temporal (the place where we are leaving)
than to the eternal (the place where we are going).*

2. Principles of Perfect Love

It is not possible to fully and satisfactorily comprehend the depths of God's perfect love for His children. It is incomprehensible and unfathomable. It is so high, so deep, so wonderful and so powerful that it cannot be effectively described with pen and ink.

In his letters written to the Romans and Ephesians, Apostle Paul attempted to describe the wonder and power of God's perfect love which is beyond the human capacity to understand.

Eph. 3:17-19

17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Rom. 8:38-39

38 For I am persuaded beyond doubt (am sure) that neither

death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things impending and threatening nor things to come, nor powers, 39 Nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. AMP

This chapter will identify and briefly describe principles to consider as we pursue a greater revelation of this infinite and unfathomable subject. Due to the constraints of time and space, only a few of the principles of “**perfect love**” are summarized here.

To set the stage for this chapter, we will first define the significant difference between man’s love and God’s perfect (agape) love.

2.1 Man’s Love Vs. God’s Love

The English language limits the description of love because there is only one word (love) which has many meanings, emotions and degrees of intensity. For example, if we said, “I love my son, I love my car, or I love candy”, obviously we are not using “love” in the same degree or meaning.

In the New Testament period there were four major Greek words that were used for love.

-- From “Four Types of Love”

Eros Love - A word that was not actually used in the New Testament but was alluded to. It meant physical passion; its gratification and fulfillment. It is inferred in many Scriptures and is the only kind of love that God restricts to a one-man, one-woman relationship within the bounds of marriage.

Storge Love - Storge is the natural bond between mother and infant, father, children, and kin. William Barclay states, "We cannot help loving our kith and kin; blood is thicker than water".

Phileo Love - Phileo love is a love of the affections. It is delighting to be in the presence of another, a warm feeling that comes and goes with intensity. The Bible encourages it but it is never a direct command. God never commands phileo since this type of love is based on the feelings. I cannot have a warm tender feeling toward an enemy but I can agape love them.

Agape Love - Agape love is God's kind of love. It is seeking the welfare and betterment of another regardless of how we feel. Agape does not have the primary meaning of feelings or affection. Jesus displayed it when he went to the cross and died for you and me regardless of how He felt. Jesus sought the betterment of you and me, regardless of His feelings.¹

Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 declares that if we do many good things working in God's Kingdom motivated by our limited human love (Phileo, Storge, and Eros), but have not God's love (Agape), it is not effective. Agape is a love that is freely given by the Lover, and it expects nothing in return.

The Word of God describes the most beautiful and complete definition of perfect love -- agape love. This description in 1 Corinthians 13 cannot be surpassed by any human description, because it is defined by God. It reflects the life and character of Jesus Christ.

PERFECT LOVE -- THE HIGHEST LAW AND STRONGEST FORCE

1 Cor. 13:4-8, 13

4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

8 Charity never faileth.

13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

This is called the “love chapter” because it gives a very detailed definition of the boundaries and attributes of God’s agape love. Verses 4-8 gives sixteen defining aspects of agape love:

1. *Suffereth Long* - This word means patient endurance in trying circumstances. This characteristic of love never retaliates.

2. *Is Kind* - This word refers to words and actions of goodness toward others. Genuine love always respects and blesses others.

3. *Envieth Not* - Is not jealous over the abilities or possessions of others, but is pleased when they do well.

4. *Vaunteth Not Itself* - Is not boastful and never draws attention to itself or to what it is doing.

5. *Is Not Puffed Up* - Is not arrogant or proud. Recognizes that any talents we possess are from God.

6. *Does Not Behave Itself Unseemly* - Is never rude, but it always treats others with compassion and respect!

Keeps emotions in control under conditions of stress.

7. *Seeketh Not Her Own* - Never self-centered, but seeks what is best for others. Puts the interest of others ahead of their own.

8. *Is Not Easily Provoked* - Does not reach in an unloving way to the unkind words or acts of others. Stops the cycle of violence by returning good for evil.

9. *Thinketh No Evil* - Attaches the best possible meaning to the motives words and conduct of others. Does not keep a record of evils done to it.

10. *Rejoiceth Not In Iniquity* - Does not gossip or find pleasure in hearing when another person falls, but grieves over the fallen brother.

11. *Rejoiceth In The Truth* - Rejoices when truth is proclaimed and wins the victory over falsehood and evil. Celebrates the goodness and virtues of others and is pleased when they do well.

12. *Beareth All Things* - Endures hurts and evils, and covers the wrongs of others (Peter 4:8). Conceal, or allow to pass unnoticed the offences of others (as far as can be lawfully done).

13. *Believeth All Things* - is trusting and gives others the benefit of the doubt. Places the most favorable interpretation on everything that happens.

14. *Hopeth All things* - always holds out hope that things will work out right in the end. Always expects the best possible outcome.

15. Endureth All Things - continues in spite of persecution and ill treatment. Does not complain and bears up under wrong treatment at the hands of a fellow-men.

16. Charity Never Fails - When everything else in this world has passed away, when everything held in such high esteem is gone, it is the great constant that will last throughout eternity.

- **You will grasp more clearly the meaning of perfect love at the personal level by substituting your name in place of “charity” or “love” in the following verses:**

[I am] very patient and [I am] kind, [I am] never jealous or envious, [I am] never boastful or proud, [I am] never haughty or selfish or rude. [I do] not demand [my] own way. [I am] not irritable or touchy. [I do] not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong. [I am] never glad about injustice, but rejoice whenever truth wins out. If [I] love someone, [I] will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. [I] will always believe in him, always expect the best of him, and always stand my ground in defending him.

How does this sound with your name in this passage? To the extent that this is not true, we see how much we must change to exhibit the agape love of Christ. If we live our lives in the context of this definition of love, we will offend fewer people. And in turn, this will eliminate much of the difficulty and pain in broken relationships and the humility required for restoration and reconciliation.

Those striving for the Kingdom and desperate for the unity that ignited revival and evangelism in the first century Church will be the only ones progressing toward the goal of

perfect love. God will test every born-again believer with opportunities to improve in forgiveness and reconciliation of relationships. The process for perfect love (agape love) to grow in our lives is to pass it on to the brotherhood and all mankind in the measure that we receive it from God.

- **The most wonderful privilege in the world is to experience the perfect love of God. May we understand that the pure joy of this free, wonderful love is to impart it in the same measure to everyone -- whether they be friend or foe.**

2.2 Follows the Golden Rule

One of the most challenging of Jesus' teachings in His "Sermon on the Mount" is the principle of the "**Golden Rule**"-- do unto others as you would have them do to you.

Matt. 7:12-14

12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat?

14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Jesus knew that this "**Golden Rule**" would be difficult to practice because the very next verse deals with the straight gate and the wide gate. Only those who travel the straight and narrow way will consistently treat others the way they would want to be treated.

-- From Matthew Henry's Commentary

We must, in our dealings with men, suppose ourselves in the same particular case and circumstances with those we have to do with, and deal accordingly. If I were making such a one's bargain, laboring under such a one's infirmity and affliction, how should I desire and expect to be treated? And this is a just supposition, because we know not how soon their case may really be ours: at least we may fear, lest God by his judgments should do to us as we have done to others.²

Many religions stress the concept of this law called the, "Golden Rule":

Buddhism: "Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful."

Confucius: "What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others."

Hinduism: "This is the sum of duty: Do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you."

Zoroaster, the ancient Persian: "Nature alone is good which refrains from doing unto another whatsoever is not good for itself."

Judaism: "What is hateful to yourself, do to no other. That is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary."

Greek philosopher Epictetus: "What thou avoidest suffering thyself seek not to impose on others."

Greek philosopher Socrates: "Do not do to others what would anger you if done to you by others."

Practical Application of the “Golden Rule”

Christ commanded that we apply the “**Golden Rule**” to every area of our relationships. Therefore, we should actively practice the “**Golden Rule**” in our daily dealings with everyone:

- Love others as we love ourselves.
- Seek to understand others as we would like to be understood.
- Forgive our brother his offense as we want Christ to forgive our offenses.
- Reconcile with our brother as we would like to be reconciled with God.
- Serve as we would like to be served.
- Overlook irritations as we would like others to overlook ours.
- Show our appreciation as we would like to be appreciated.

When we apply these principles in our life, we will be impartial, just, gentle and kind. All selfish, critical and judgmental attitudes, words and actions will be destroyed. The fruit of the Spirit will then be consistently displayed in our lives: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, meekness, faith and temperance.

2.3 Is Not Easily Offended

King David, the man after God’s own heart penned these timeless words of wisdom: “***Great peace have they that love thy law and nothing shall offend them***” (Psalms 119:165). He observed about his critics: “*I choose to hear nothing, and I make no reply*” (Psalms 38:13).

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Prov. 10:12

Hate stirs up trouble, but love forgives all offenses. GNT

Prov. 17:9

He who covers and forgives an offense seeks love, but he who repeats or harps on a matter separates even close friends. AMP

When God's perfect love is flowing through us we can't be offended, because we have already forgiven our offender in advance. Love overlooks and covers over the faults of others -- looking for their good and emphasizing their value: "*Love (God's love in us) takes no account of the evil done to it [it pays no attention to a suffered wrong]*" (1 Cor. 13:5). AMP

1 Peter 4:7-8

7 But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

*8 Above all things have intense and unfailing love for one another, for **love covers a multitude of sins** [forgives and disregards the offenses of others]. AMP*

-- From Matthew Henry's Commentary

It is the property of true charity to cover a multitude of sins. It inclines people to forgive and forget offences against themselves, to cover and conceal the sins of others, rather than aggravate them and spread them abroad. And it prepares for mercy at the hand of God, who hath promised to forgive those that forgive others and to give mercy to those that are merciful.²

- **Perfect love is gentle, delicate, and kind; to faults compassionate, deaf and blind.**

The person who is easily offended reveals that death to self has not occurred. One of the signs of the endtime is, ***“Many shall be offended”***. If we let things that happen in the brotherhood cause us to respond negatively, it may jeopardize our goal of eternal life and possibly that of our brother. God may be allowing this to reveal to us a dormant spirit of offense in our life.

- **Being offended is a result of having a spirit of offense.**

Only the Refiner’s fire will reveal the impurities in gold. And when that happens to us, we should thank God for loving us enough to reveal the impurities in our life -- allowing our brother to do something that causes a wrong response in us. Refer to Chapter 10: “Love Perfected by the Refiner's Fire and the Cross”.

2.4 Is Careful to Never Offend

Perfect love will always be sensitive to another’s feelings and be careful to never offend them. Apostle Paul stated that he lived in such a way as to have no offense toward God or man: ***“And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men”*** (Acts 24:16).

Apostle Paul says that if eating certain meats, which are not wrong to eat, causes his brother to be offended, he will forever abstain from it.

1 Cor. 8:9, 12-13

9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak.

12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.

*13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, **lest I make my brother to offend.***

1 Cor. 10:31-33

31 You must do everything for the glory of God, even your eating and drinking.

32 So don't be a stumbling block to anyone, whether they are Jews or Gentiles or Christians.

*33 That is the plan I follow, too. I try to please everyone in everything I do, **not doing what I like or what is best for me but what is best for them, so that they may be saved.** TLB*

Jesus issued a stern warning to anyone who would offend someone and cause them to stumble.

Matt. 18:6-7

6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

7 Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

2.5 Is Not Critical or Judgmental

When we criticize someone, whether they are right or wrong, we are acting as the judge. This judgment seat is reserved only for our heavenly Father.

**Jesus Christ is the Law Giver and the Only One
Qualified to Prosecute the Law**

God is always a fair and long-suffering Judge. He is perfect and cannot make a mistake. When people assert themselves as the judge, they are displaying a holier-than-thou attitude.

- **When someone presumptuously ascends to the judgment seat, reserved only for the Father, they cannot see their own character flaws or hear the Father's correction for their own faults.**

By moving to the judgment seat, they have already committed the sin of self-righteousness and have taken a high place reserved only for the Judge of all the earth.

James 4:11-12

11 Don't criticize and speak evil about each other, dear brothers. If you do, you will be fighting against God's law of loving one another, declaring it is wrong. But your job is not to decide whether this law is right or wrong, but to obey it.

12 Only he who made the law can rightly judge among us. He alone decides to save us or destroy. So what right do you have to judge or criticize others? TLB

Before we judge or criticize someone let us remember the words of Jesus: *"He that is without sin let him cast the first stone."* If you know something that would hurt someone's reputation, never repeat it. Perfect love will always protect by being compassionate, merciful and kind. We show love in many ways by avoiding prejudice and discrimination; by accepting people, by listening, helping, giving, serving and **refusing to judge.**

Jesus Warns of Judging or Being Critical of Another

Matt. 7:1-5

1 Do not judge and criticize and condemn others, so that you may not be judged and criticized and condemned yourselves.

2 For just as you judge and criticize and condemn others, you will be judged and criticized and condemned, and in accordance with the measure you [use to] deal out to others; it will be dealt out again to you.

3 Why do you stare from without at the very small particle that is in your brother's eye but do not become aware of and consider the beam of timber that is in your own eye?

4 Or how can you say to your brother, Let me get the tiny particle out of your eye, when there is the beam of timber in your own eye?

5 You hypocrite, first get the beam of timber out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the tiny particle out of your brother's eye. AMP

Apostle Paul Reminds Us That We Will All Stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ

Rom. 14:10, 12-13, 19

10 Why do you criticize and pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you look down upon or despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God.

12 And so each of us shall give an account of himself [give an answer in reference to judgment] to God.

13 Then let us no more criticize and blame and pass judgment on one another, but rather decide and endeavor never to put a stumbling block or an obstacle or a hindrance

in the way of a brother.

19 So let us then definitely aim for and eagerly pursue what makes for harmony and for mutual upbuilding (edification and development) of one another. AMP

Apostle Paul Establishes Godly Guidelines for What We Should Think, Which Affects What We Should Say

Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount declared that: “*From the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.*” Since what we think controls what we say, the words in the following passage, “**think on these things**” may appropriately be changed to, “**speak only of these things**”:

Phil. 4:8

*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are **true**, whatsoever things are **honest**, whatsoever things are **just**, whatsoever things are **pure**, whatsoever things are **lovely**, whatsoever things are of **good report**; if there be any **virtue**, and if there be any **praise**, (**speak only of these things**).*

Christian Guidelines for Social Media: The way we communicate has dramatically changed in the last few years with the advent of social media. This is a wonderful tool to connect and communicate when used with the **filter of perfect love**. But it can also be very evil, vindictive and even destructive when words and thoughts are broadcast to one or many instantly, without much thought. The same biblical guidelines, written by Apostle Paul almost 2,000 years ago, for what we should speak are still applicable to what we communicate through social media (E-mail, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.): Is it true? Is it honest? Is it just? Is it pure? Is it lovely? Is it a good report? Is it

virtuous? Is it praise worthy?

Perfect love will always cause us to:

- Guard our **mind** -- thinking only on these things (pure thoughts).
 - Guard our **ears** -- listening only to these things (refusing to listen to gossip).
 - Guard our **eyes** -- seeing only these things (only the good in our brother).
 - Guard our **lips** -- speaking only of these things (looking for opportunities to say good things about others).
- **The world, and particularly the family of God, will be a much better place when people are recognized more for their goodness than for their faults.**

**Apostle James Deals With the Problem of the
Unruly Tongue**

James 3:2, 6, 8

*2 For in many things we offend all. **If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man,** and able also to bridle the whole body.*

6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

8 The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

Additional Scriptures: James 3:10-13, 17-18.

- **Seldom is criticism done by a Christian in an evil, vicious and obvious manner. Rather, it manifests its self in a low chatter of less than complimentary comments -- expressing a concern or a negative attitude (inferring that our way of doing things is superior): “These things ought not to be” (James 3:10).**

**King David, the Man After God’s Own Heart,
Addresses the Theme of Being Judgmental or Critical**

Psalms 15:1, 3

1 Who may worship in your sanctuary, Lord? Who may enter your presence on your holy hill?

3 Those who refuse to gossip or harm their neighbors or speak evil of their friends.

Psalms 101:5-6

5 I put a gag on the gossip who bad-mouths his neighbor; I can’t stand arrogance.

6 But I have my eye on salt-of-the-earth people — they’re the ones I want working with me; Men and women on the straight and narrow — these are the ones I want at my side. MSG

**King Solomon, the Wisest Man, Warns of God’s
Displeasure With Gossip**

Prov. 6:16, 19

16 These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

*19 . . . he that **soweth discord** among brethren.*

Prov. 17:3-4

3 Fire tests the purity of silver and gold, but the Lord tests the heart.

4 Wrongdoers eagerly listen to gossip; liars pay close attention to slander. NLT

Gossip or, “sharing a concern,” as it is sometimes called, is a sin for the speaker and listener (if he continues to be a part of the conversation).

- **For backbiting or gossip it takes two people -- a speaker and a listener. We should adopt this precept: “Hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil.”**

Quotes -- Critical or Judgmental Comments

“If you are tempted to reveal, a tale to you someone has told about another, make it pass before you speak three gates of gold: First. ‘Is it true?’ Then ‘Is it needful?’ And the next is last and narrowest, ‘Is it kind?’” (Beth Day)

“I have made a ceaseless effort not to ridicule, not to bewail, not to scorn human actions, but to understand them.” (Baruch Spinoza)

“How seldom we weigh our brother in the same balance with ourselves.” (Thomas A. Kempis)

“Whoever wants to embrace life and see the day fill up with good, here’s what you do: **Say nothing evil or hurtful.**” (Apostle Peter)

“Whatever you dislike in another person take care to correct in yourself.” (Thomas A. Kempis)

“Since the Holy Spirit is not the source of critical or judgmental remarks regarding a brother, the source must be an unholy spirit.” (Unknown)

“It is pride that makes us judge; it is pride that seeks to vindicate ourselves, taking no blame for the misunderstanding.” (Unknown)

“Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be.” (Thomas a Kempis)

-- From “The Spiritual Man”

Most soulish believers have a great deal of spiritual knowledge, but their experiences can never match what they know. Because they know much, they also condemn much. Thus, criticizing others becomes a common characteristic of soulish believers. They receive grace to have knowledge, but unlike spiritual believers, they do not receive grace to have humility.

Therefore there is a certain hardness in their dealings with people. To those that are closely associated with them, they give the impression of having a certain, “stiffness”, hard shell. They are not like spiritual believers whose outer shell has been broken so that they are approachable and kind to others.³

2.6 Is Submissive and Accountable

Submission is defined as: “The act of bending or submitting to the authority or control of someone else, the condition of being humble or compliant. Synonyms include: compliance, subordination, agreeability, amenability, teachableness,

trainability; yielding, humility.”⁴

Submission has been defined as: “Your mission under someone else’s mission.”

Rev. Terry Shock stated: “The absence of submission is the absence of power and supernatural order.”

Accountable is defined as: “Required to explain actions or decisions to someone, subject to giving an account. Synonyms include: amenable, answerable, obliged.”⁴

Perfect love brings about submissiveness and accountability: (a) first to **God**, (b) second to a **man of God** and (c) third to **each another** (our brothers and sisters in Christ).

(a) Submissive and Accountable to God

We will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give account of our actions. To insure that we will be in right standing at the judgment, we should be accountable to Him every day.

Eph. 1:22

*God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him **head over all things for the benefit of the church.***

Heb. 12:9

*Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather **be in subjection unto the Father of spirits**, and live?*

James 4:7, 10

7 Submit yourselves therefore to God.

10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall

lift you up.

(b) Submissive and Accountable to a Man of God

God's plan is for a man of God to provide spiritual direction in our lives; thereby we should be accountable.

Eph. 4:11-12

*And he gave . . . pastors . . . for the **perfecting of the saints.***

Heb. 13:17

*Obey them that have the rule over you, and **submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account.***

1 Thess. 5:12-13

*12 Dear brothers and sisters, **honor those who are your leaders in the Lord's work.** They work hard among you and give you spiritual guidance.*

13 Show them great respect and wholehearted love because of their work. And live peacefully with each other. NLT

Double Jeopardy of the Fivefold Ministry

We who are a part of the fivefold ministry stand in double jeopardy, for we must first apply and assimilate the Word of God before we teach and preach it.

Paul recognized this serious issue and challenge. He aggressively addressed it when he documented his training program: "*Now every athlete who goes into training conducts himself temperately and restricts himself in all things . . . [Like a boxer] I buffet my body [handle it roughly, discipline it by hardships] and subdue it, for fear that after proclaiming to others the Gospel and things pertaining to it, I myself should*

become unfit [not stand the test, be unapproved and rejected as a counterfeit]” (1 Cor. 9:25-27). AMP

In the Old Testament the high priest was commanded to go behind the veil, into the Holy of Holies, first to make atonement for himself and his family before he went behind the veil to make atonement for the children of Israel: “*And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which is for **himself**, and shall make an atonement for **himself**, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is for **himself**” (Lev. 16:11).* If this was not done or done improperly, he was immediately judged and executed by God and replaced with another high priest.

Just as the saints in a congregation are taught to be submissive and accountable to their pastor, pastors should be submissive and accountable to the leaders that have been given oversight for the churches in their district, state or nation. The ministry must be first partakers of submission (humility) and unity and must not require more of their flock.

It is one thing to be a hypocrite in the pew but a much more serious and fearful implication to be a hypocrite in the pulpit. And as ministers work together in humility and unity with their leaders, it will help ensure unity among their congregations.

- **For someone to have authority, they must submit to authority.**

(c) Submissive and Accountable to One Another

Everyone needs to be accountable to one or more people in their personal lives -- someone who has veto power to correct or redirect their actions. We should have mentors in our

lives and we should be a mentor to others.

Eph. 5:21

*21 Out of respect for Christ, be courteously **reverent to one another.** MSG*

*21 Honor Christ by **submitting to each other.** TLB*

Heb. 10:24

*And let us consider and give attentive, continuous care to **watching over one another**, studying how we may stir up (stimulate and incite) to love and helpful deeds and noble activities. AMP*

1 Tim. 4:12

*Be thou an **example of the believers**, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*

The lack of submission and demanding to have our own way at the expense of unity, are listed among the terrible sins of the flesh: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, idolatry, and witchcraft. These are all contrary to the fruit of the Spirit that should be flourishing in the Christian's life.

Gal. 5:19-20

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

*20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, **emulations, wrath, strife**, seditions, heresies,*

*20 **Constant effort to get the best for yourself, complaints and criticisms** . . . TLB*

*20 **Divisions (dissensions), factions** . . . AMP*

Could it be that sins of the spirit (*pride, arrogance, hypocrisy, and ambition, etc.*) are possibly more devastating to the Kingdom than sins of the flesh? When King David committed the sin of adultery, a few men died in battle with Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba. But when David's pride, arrogance and wrong motive caused him to sin by numbering Israel, to show the strength of his army (1,300,000 able-bodied fighting men), the angel of the Lord killed 70,000 men. King David was warned against this act by Joab, the captain of the army, but he refused to be accountable or submissive to his wise council and advice (2 Sam. 24:2-4).

- **Perfect love will cause us to be submissive to God, to those in authority and to each other.**
- **Everyone should have someone in their life who has veto power to correct or redirect their actions.**
- **The lack of submission to authority, when left unchecked and unrepentant, will lead to rebellion with serious unintended consequences.**

2.7 Does Not Demand Its Rights

We should emulate the example Jesus displayed in relinquishing His rights: *“Your attitude should be the kind that was shown us by Jesus Christ, Who, though he was God, did not demand and cling to his rights as God, but laid aside his mighty power and glory, taking the disguise of a slave and becoming like men. And he humbled himself even further, going so far as actually to die a criminal's death on a cross”* (Phil. 2:5-8). TLB

If we live in agreement with the Scripture, ***“Ye are not your***

own, for ye are bought with a price", then we demand no rights. We have no rights because Jesus Christ is our owner / agent.

This is a difficult subject – a hard saying. It is included here because the acceptance of this foundational principle of God's Word will:

- Improve our relationship with God and man.
- Bring unity and peace to the church, and the born-again believer.
- Prevent many from falling into satan's trap of offense.

To be clear, this is not inferring that we may not seek for "justice" in a regular and proper way before civil tribunals when our rights have been violated (assault, robbery, etc.). Instead this is referring to relationship with our brother or neighbor (saved or unsaved), and especially those of the household of faith.

If He truly has purchased us we can't demand our rights, because we have none. He is our owner / agent and when He purchased us with His blood covenant (contract) we relinquished our rights.

- **As a servant of God, when we relinquish our rights to Him, we relinquish our right to be treated right.**

1 Cor. 6:19-20

*19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and **ye are not your own?***

*20 **For ye are bought with a price:** therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

Acts 20:28

. . . the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Eph. 1:7

*In whom we have **redemption** through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;*

Redemption - apolutroosis, apolutrooseos

a. to redeem one by paying the price

b. to let one go free on receiving the price: a releasing effected by payment of ransom; redemption, deliverance, liberation procured by the payment of a ransom.⁵

We belong to Him because He purchased us with His own blood. When we entered the blood covenant of redemption with Jesus Christ we relinquished our rights as a servant of Jesus. Therefore, we can never demand our rights – including the right to be treated right. When we demand to be treated a certain way, this demand can easily lead to conflicts in relationships.

- **When we are treated fairly, that is a blessing for which we should thank God. But when we are treated unfairly, we must leave it in God's hand, then love and pray for those who despitely use us.**
- **Only when we relinquish our rights to Him will we experience the true peace of God.**
- **When we are secure in our relationship with God, we trust Him and allow Him to become our defender and defense attorney -- leaving the matter of conflict in His hands.**

Heb. 10:30

*For we know Him Who said, **Vengeance is Mine** [retribution and the meting out of full justice rest with Me]; I will repay [I will exact the compensation], says the Lord. And again, The Lord will judge and determine and solve and settle the cause and the cases of His people [Deut. 32:35-36]. AMP*

Rom. 12:18-21

18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

*19 Dearly beloved, **avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath**: for it is written, **Vengeance is mine; I will repay**, saith the Lord.*

20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

*21 Be not overcome of evil, but **overcome evil with good**.*

- **Vengeance is a double edge sword with no handle. It will cut and wound the one wielding the sword as much, and possibly more, than the one who is the target of the blade.**

-- From Barnes' Notes

[**Vengeance is mine**] That is, it belongs to me to inflict revenge. This expression implies that it is "improper" for people to interfere with that which properly belongs to God. When we are angry, and attempt to avenge ourselves, we should remember, therefore, that we are infringing on the prerogatives of the Almighty.

[**I will repay ...**] Its design is to assure us that those who deserve to be punished, shall be; and that, therefore, the business of revenge may be safely left in the hands of

God. That God will vindicate his people, is clearly and abundantly proved in 2 Thess. 1:6-10; Rev. 6:9-11; Deut. 32:40-43.⁶

We often spend too much time and energy determining who is right and who is wrong. In our kingdom, there are two sides to a conflict or misunderstanding. In His Kingdom, there is only one side -- the **humble side**. We must choose the humble side or He will humble us.

2.8 Exhibits Humility in the Pursuit of Unity

God's perfect love creates an atmosphere of humility among the brotherhood. Here the beautiful spirit of "*one mind and one accord*" unity can operate to create the explosion of revival and evangelism witnessed at the birth of the New Testament Church on the day of Pentecost.

Col. 3:12-14

*12 Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, **humility**, gentleness, and patience.*

13 Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony [unity]. NLT

Eph. 4:1-4

1 I therefore beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

*2 **Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.***

3 Try always to be led along together by the Holy Spirit and

so be at peace with one another.

4 We are all parts of one body, we have the same Spirit, and we have all been called to the same glorious future. NLT

If unity brings the favor and power of God to His people, disunity brings God's disfavor and hinders His power working among us.

Refer to the following chapters for a more detailed discussion of humility and unity:

Chapter 6 "Humility Created by Perfect Love -- the Key to Unity"

Chapter 7 "Unity the Key to Another Pentecost"

2.9 Forgives and Seeks Reconciliation

In His Sermon on the Mount, after teaching the Beatitudes, Jesus deals with how we should react to an offense by a brother.

Matt. 5:23-24

*23 So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly **remember that someone has something against you,***

*24 leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be **reconciled to that person.** Then come and offer your sacrifice to God. NLT*

The Father calls on the one closest to Him (the one kneeling in prayer or standing in a place of worship) to take this first step in the process of reconciliation. We go to our brother in sincerity, humility and love, asking for his forgiveness for our part in the misunderstanding. We are commanded to forgive and be reconciled with one another as God has

forgiven and reconciled with us.

Col. 3:13

Be gentle and forbearing with one another and, if one has a difference (a grievance or complaint) against another, readily pardoning each other; even as the Lord has [freely] forgiven you, so must you also [forgive]. AMP

For a detailed discussion of forgiveness and reconciliation, refer to Chapter 9, "Biblical Forgiveness Involves Reconciliation of the Relationship."

2.10 Loves God More Than Anyone or Anything

Anyone or anything we love more than God is an idol, making us idolaters. Such idols must be destroyed to elevate God to first place in our lives. God is a jealous lover and loves us so much that He will not tolerate a competing love: "*For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous (impassioned) God*" (Ex. 34:14). AMP

Matt. 6:24

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will stand by and be devoted to the one and despise and be against the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (deceitful riches, money, possessions, or whatever is trusted in). AMP

Bishop James L. Kilgore stated: **"If He is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all."**

To love God with a divided heart is not acceptable and is like not loving Him at all. He will not accept second place -- if He is not first, He will be last. He will not tolerate idolatry (worship of another) or fornication (having another lover),

which are the two sins for which He destroyed Israel. When He is not first in our life, we have an idol. When we do not love Him first, we have another love in our life.

-- From “A Look Into Your Heart”

What could your idol be? Anything that you value more than God -- even though it may be good in itself -- for this takes His place in your life. Anything that you prefer to God, whom you are called to love above all else. Your work, your career -- no time for Him. Your reputation, your status -- no honor for Him. Your family, life, husband or child -- God does not have first place in your life. Your house, your home -- instead of treasure in heaven. Your vacations, your travels -- instead of time spent with God. Your health, your appearance. Every earthly thing that devalues for you the divine gifts received through fellowship with Him. Everything that is more important to you than the Lord.⁷

Love for Family and Friends

Luke 14:26

26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

26 Anyone who wants to be my follower must love me far more than he does his own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, or sisters - yes, more than his own life -- otherwise he cannot be my disciple. TLB

Jesus was not commanding men to hate their own families in

the sense of being unloving or unkind. This strong language indicates that devotion to one's family must take second place to devotion to Christ.

As Christians we must love our families, however, Luke states that to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, we must comparatively hate them -- love them less than Christ.

"When our duty to our parents comes in conflict with our duty to Christ, we must give Christ the preference. If we must either deny Christ or be banished from our families and relations (as many of the primitive Christians were), we must rather lose their society than His favour".²

Love for Possessions, Prestige or Power

Jesus clearly described what He requires for His followers to be a disciple: forsake all, store up treasures in heaven (not on earth) and seek first His Kingdom. When we do this He has promised to: *"Supply all our need according to his riches in glory"* (Phil. 4:19).

Luke 14:33

So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

Matt. 6:19-21, 33

19 Do not gather and heap up and store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust and worm consume and destroy, and where thieves break through and steal.

20 But gather and heap up and store for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust nor worm consume and destroy, and where thieves do not break through and steal;

21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

33 But seek (aim at and strive after) first of all His kingdom and His righteousness (His way of doing and being right), and then all these things taken together will be given you besides. AMP

To ***“Seek first the Kingdom of God”*** is to:

- Submit every area of our life to His authority.
- Process every decision and plan (large or small) through the filter of His Lordship.
- ***“All these things shall be given to you”, simply means what we submit to Christ, He blesses.***

God does indeed want us to lead a contented, fulfilled life. However, He does not want us to lose sight of the most important thing, which is putting Him and others first. More importantly, God expects us to be good stewards of our God-given resources: our **health** (energy), our **wealth** (possessions) and our **time**. And as we thank God for these blessings, we should ask Him for wisdom to use them wisely.

- **The choices we make concerning our time and finances are two of the primary ways that we show God His place in our lives.**

Occasionally, it is useful to get in a quiet place and write down our activities in these important areas of life, compared to what we should be doing. The following charts in the Addendum Volume are helpful in this review of priorities for our time, health and wealth:

H-19 How Am I Currently Managing God-given Resources?

H-20 How Should I Wisely Manage God-given Resources?

With God's help, we can properly prioritize our use of these resources. No one can do this for us. It is called, "***Working out your own salvation with fear and trembling.***"

Phil. 2:12

*Therefore, my dear ones . . . **work out** (cultivate, carry out to the goal, and fully complete) **your own salvation with reverence and awe and trembling** (self-distrust, with serious caution, tenderness of conscience, watchfulness against temptation, timidly shrinking from whatever might offend God and discredit the name of Christ). AMP*

Our priorities should not be set to accommodate what is convenient or best for us. They should be established by the Word of God, the Spirit of God and the man of God:

- The written Word.
- The Voice of the Spirit (speaking into our spirit).
- The preached Word.

Danger of Possessions Competing With Love For God

A great hindrance to revival and evangelism is the elements of affluence and materialism. We in America have been greatly blessed by God. But these blessings may become curses if our affinity for them replaces our love and devotion for Him.

I have traveled on mission trips to places of tremendous poverty in Mexico, Guatemala and the Philippines where many live in shelters of tin, cardboard and sticks with dirt floors. There I witnessed tremendous love and dedication for God that supersede some who live in privilege and plenty.

- **May it never be true that we love Jesus Christ less because we have more possessions.**
- **May it never be true that we are more dedicated to the temporal (*the place where we are leaving*) than to the eternal (*the place where we are going*).**

Several dangers can be associated with materialism. When our predominant goals are making profit, pursuing pleasure, and obtaining position, little time and energy remains to focus on God's will. Often we selectively emphasize some concepts of Christian duty (church attendance, paying tithes, etc.) while ignoring the importance of encouraging and ministering to people in need, etc.

The American Dream Vs. God's Dream: The American dream is driven by the American consumer's addictive culture. It is an unquenchable thirst for more. Apostle Paul warned about this in his letter to Timothy: *"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows"* (1 Tim. 6:10).

This root of all evil (love of money) is a hunger for power, position and possessions. This culture opposes the Apostolic lifestyle portrayed in the first century Church and taught by Jesus and the New Testament writers.

Being rich was never condemned by Jesus Christ. It is not a sin to be wealthy, but it is a sin to make wealth our god. Among Bible characters who were notably rich and greatly blessed by God were: Abraham, Job and David. God told Abraham: "I am greatly blessing you to bless others."

We can view our possessions and pursuits through God's eyes or in a mirror reflecting only ourselves. These resources can make us generous or selfish, depending on the dictates of our hearts. Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: *"Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. **Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others.** By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life"* (1 Tim. 6:17-19). NLT

There are perils to prosperity (Prov. 30:7-9). Wealth can choke the Word of God (Matt. 13:22), create snares and temptations (1 Tim. 6:6-10), and create a false sense of security (Mark 10:24-35, 1 Tim. 6:17-19). While wealth can provide temporal satisfaction, it cannot permanently meet the needs of the inner man.

- **People who are satisfied only with what money can buy face the danger of losing the things that money cannot buy. If we are not alert, we can be infected with covetousness without knowing it.**

King Solomon's Disillusion With Possessions and Power

King Solomon received great wisdom from God: *"I will give you a wise and understanding heart such as no one else has had or ever will have!"* (1 Kings 3:12). But, King Solomon let the love of wealth, honor and women supersede his love for God. He amassed great fame and fortune. By worldly

standards, he climbed the ladder of success to the highest pinnacle. But at the end of his life, as he surveyed his possessions and life's work, he discovered that his ladder was leaning against the wrong wall. He cried out in despair: "***all is vanity.***"

Eccl. 2:4-7, 11, 17

*I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards. I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees I made me pools of water . . . I got me servants and maidens, and . . . I had great possessions of great and small cattle . . . Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, ***all was vanity and vexation of spirit***, and there was no profit under the sun. Therefore ***I hated life***; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for ***all is vanity and vexation of spirit***.*

Fame and fortune are worthless compared to the satisfaction and reward of loving and serving God. It is temporarily satisfying to trust in perishable riches. It is vanity to seek high honor. It is vanity to follow fleshly desires while neglecting the eternal issues of life. May we grasp and apply this message so that nothing overshadows our love for God.

- **King Solomon's sad conclusion at the end of his life is forever etched in the stone of eternity: "Wealth, fame and fortune do not satisfy the soul -- they are all vanity."**

Jesus warned against seeking material things of our kingdom instead of the eternal ones of His Kingdom. He reiterated this message many times with parables and real life examples -- one being the rich foolish farmer.

The Rich Foolish Farmer

Luke 12:15-21

*15 And Jesus said to them, **Guard yourselves and keep free from all covetousness (the immoderate desire for wealth, the greedy longing to have more); for a man's life does not consist in and is not derived from possessing overflowing abundance or that which is over and above his needs.***

16 Then He told them a parable, saying, the land of a rich man was fertile and yielded plentifully.

17 And he considered and debated within himself, what shall I do? I have no place [in which] to gather together my harvest.

18 And he said, I will do this: I will pull down my storehouses and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain or produce and my goods.

19 And I will say to my soul, soul, you have many good things laid up, [enough] for many years. Take your ease; eat, drink, and enjoy yourself merrily.

20 But God said to him, you fool! This very night they [the messengers of God] will demand your soul of you; and all the things that you have prepared, whose will they be?

*21 **So it is with the one who continues to lay up and hoard possessions for himself and is not rich [in his relation] to God. AMP***

The rich farmer's sin was regarding the possessions as his own absolute property. He received the gift and forgot the Giver. He must not have considered sharing the harvest with others, only to build bigger barns for storage.

God desires to bless His people, but He does not bless them

to horde. He told Abraham: *“I will bless you [with abundant increase] . . . and you will be a blessing [dispensing good to others]”* (Gen. 12:2). AMP

The rich farmer was not judged because he had a great crop; God gave him the crop. He was judged because he stockpiled it in the barn instead of sharing to feed the starving.

Saint Augustine replied to the rich farmer’s soliloquy: “Thou hast barns, the bosoms of the needy, the houses of widows, and the mouths of orphans and of infants; these are the true storehouses for surplus wealth. It is right to provide for those who are dependent upon us; it is prudent to lay up something in store against a possible evil day; but after that, the storehouse of wealth should be benevolence.”

The folly of this rich man was that he had entirely ignored the truth -- his material possessions would not always be his. He had locked the door against poverty and seemingly had secured his future. The house of feasting was ready, but he could not bar the door against the death angel.

“How much did he leave?” asked one man of another, in the street-car, as they discussed the death of a certain millionaire. “All he had”, was the solemn reply -- for there are no pockets in a shroud.

-- From Adam Clarke’s Commentary

[Thou fool!] To imagine that a man's comfort and peace can depend upon temporal things; or to suppose that these can satisfy the wishes of an immortal spirit!

[This night] How awful was this saying! He had just made the necessary arrangements for the gratification of

his sensual appetites; and, in the very night in which he had finally settled all his plans, his soul was called into the eternal world!

What a dreadful awakening of a soul, long asleep in sin! He is now hurried into the presence of his Maker; none of his worldly goods can accompany him, and he has not a particle of heavenly treasure!⁸

- **Every accomplishment and possession in life pales in comparison to the priceless value of eternal life.**

Apostle Paul, writing from prison to the Church in Philippi, surveyed all the gains that he had made in life prior to meeting Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus -- his pedigree, heritage, education, position, power and recognition in the religious community.

Although he was in prison facing a pending execution, he assessed his life with Jesus far superior and all else as garbage. May we, like Apostle Paul, pursue the things of the eternal and not the temporal:

Phil. 3:4-5, 7-8

4 Though I could have confidence in my own effort if anyone could. Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more!

5 I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law.

7 I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done.

8 Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ, and become one with him. NLT

- **The Creator of the universe posed the most important question of life: “What shall it profit a man if he gains” [not 999 trillion dollars, but] “the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”**

2.11 Places God First in Everything

The “first mention” of God’s acceptance and rejection on an offering was in Genesis when Cain and Able presented their offerings to the Lord: *“When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the Lord. Abel also brought a gift -- the **best of the firstborn** lambs from his flock. The Lord accepted Abel and his gift, but he did not accept Cain and his gift” (Gen. 4:3-5). NLT*

-- From The Pulpit Commentary

Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock. Either the firstborn, which God afterwards demanded (Ex. 13:12), or the choicest and best (Job 18:13; Jer. 31:19; Heb. 12:23). And the fat thereof. Literally, the fatness of them, i.e. the fattest of the firstlings, “the best he had, and the best of those best.”

We cannot confirm the various reasons often suggested as to why Cain’s offering was rejected. But we can clearly see that God does not accept every offering. He accepts some while rejecting others. He accepts those,

like Able's, whose love for Him reflects putting Him first -- giving Him their best.

God rejects those that reflect a lack of love and respect worthy of the King of Kings: *"I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts, nor will I accept an offering from your hand. In every place incense shall be offered to My name, and indeed a pure offering; My name shall be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts"* (Mal. 1:10-11).⁹

The "Law of First Things" is the way God establishes His Lordship in the lives of His people from generation to generation.

The Law of First Things (Putting God First)

Old Testament: In the "Law of First Things", established in the Old Testament, the people of Israel were commanded to give the first born of their flocks and first fruits of their fields as an offering -- proving the position held by their God.

Ex. 13:11-12

11 And when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as He promised and swore to you and your fathers, and shall give it to you,

12 You shall set apart to the Lord all that first opens the womb. All the firstlings of your livestock that are males shall be the Lord's. AMP

Ex. 34:19

Every firstborn male is mine -- cattle, sheep, and goats. TLB

Ex. 34:26

And you must bring the best of the first of each year's crop to the Tabernacle of the Lord your God. TLB

When we give God the first part, He will bless the rest:

“Bring all the tithes (the whole tenth of your income) into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and prove Me now by it, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer [insects and plagues] for your sakes and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground, neither shall your vine drop its fruit before the time in the field, says the Lord of hosts” (Mal. 3:10-11). AMP

New Testament: Regarding the “Law of First Things” in the New Testament, we are commanded to put God first by:

(1) Presenting our bodies a living sacrifice (vs. animal sacrifices): *“Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1).*

(2) Seeking first the Kingdom of God: *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).*

(3) Giving the first part of our income: *“On the first [day] of each week, let each one of you [personally] put aside something and save it up as he has prospered [in proportion to what he is given]” (1 Cor. 16:2). AMP*

Additional Scriptures: Ex. 13:14-16, Ex. 23:19, Ex. 34:26, Deut. 26:2, Num. 15:20, Prov. 3:9-10.

Places God First in the Usage of Our Time

Time is the most valuable resource that God has given to man. Every day He deposits 1,440 minutes into our account, and we are accountable as to how we use them. Wasted time is like water spilled on the ground; it is lost forever. God will forgive us of sin, but He may not give us back wasted time.

- **A great life challenge is to wisely manage and spend our time (our most precious resource) with wholesome activities adding value to our life and to others.**
- **Guard against misjudging the brevity of life and the length of eternity.**

Scripture teaches that time is valuable and we should use it wisely. King David, King Solomon, and Job address the brevity and frailty of life:

Psalms 39:4

LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.

Eccl. 12:6-7

6 Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.

7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

Job 7:6

My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle.

-- From “Wasting Time”

If time be of all things the most precious, wasting time must be the greatest sin, since lost time is never found again. Spend your time in nothing which you:

- Must repent of.
- Might not pray for the blessing of God.
- Could not review with a quiet conscience on your death bed.
- Might not safely and properly be found doing if death should surprise you in the act.¹⁰

Luke 6:38

*If you give, you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full measure, pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, and running over. **Whatever measure you use in giving -- large or small -- it will be used to measure what is given back to you.** NLT*

This Scripture is generally used to emphasize giving finances to God and how He multiplies the rest.

- **More valuable than our gift of money to God and others is our gift of time.**

As we give God more time in daily personal devotion, faithfulness to His house, and Christian service, He will multiply and give time back in numerous ways, including these:

- Eliminating problems in our life that would cost us hundreds of hours.
- Making us more productive in the use of time in our daily responsibilities.

- **The greatest tragedy is a life dedicated to a temporal world which we are leaving rather than to the eternal one where we are going.**

2.12 Returns Christ's Love by Continuing His Ministry

Jesus (God tabernacled in human flesh) walked on this earth for 33.5 years and performed His beautiful miracle ministry of love for 3.5 years. It is His will for us to follow in His footsteps, and continue His miracle ministry of love -- doing even greater works.

John 14:12

*He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and **greater works than these shall he do**; because I go unto my father.*

1 Peter 2:21

*For God called you to do good. He is your example, and you must **follow in his steps**. NLT*

2 Peter 1:4

*Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be **partakers of the divine nature [God's perfect love]**.*

Jesus died before His mission was completed -- crucified in the prime of His life. Isaiah foretold this event:

Isa. 53:8

*He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And **who shall declare his generation?***

What is our answer and response to Isaiah's question: ***"Who shall declare His generation?"*** Who will keep telling His story? Who will keep performing His loving actions of healing, help and hope for our lost and hurting generation?

Jesus declared that when you minister to one of His children in need you are ministering to Him: *"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."*

- The only way we can love God more is to love His children more.
- The only way we can do something for God is to do something for one of His children in need.
- The only way we can begin to repay Jesus Christ for His great love to us, is to pass it on to our brothers, our neighbors and even our enemies (His unsaved children).

Refer to the following Charts in Appendix 1:

C-19 Love for My Kingdom Vs. Love for God's Kingdom

G-23 Ministering to Natural and Spiritual Needs
(Depicts our roles in ministering to others with our dual nature as son of God and son of man.)

G-26 Love Involves Compassion and Care (action)

G-27 Loving God is Loving People

Principles of Perfect Love

Refer to the following for a more detailed discussion of “Returning Christ’s Love”:

Chapter 5 “Loving the Brotherhood”

Chapter 8 “We Are Connected to Our Brother Through
Our Father”

Chapter 12 “Our Love for God”

Like the saints in the Church of Ephesus, we may be very secure in our doctrine and faithful in our sacrifice and service to God. But we must make sure that we have a true love for God and others, especially those in the household of faith -- the body of Christ.

** * * * **

God cares more about our character and conduct than He does about our occupational status (our position or work in the church).

3. God's Warning of Leaving Your First Love

Letters in Revelation 2 and 3 to the seven churches were to actual assemblies in the country of Turkey. One of these was Ephesus, a famous church planted by the Apostle Paul.

The message to the Church of Ephesus is possibly the most important and relevant message to the Church and born-again believers today -- the message of **“you have left your first love”**. It is underscored at the end of the letter with this admonition: *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit sayeth to the churches” (Rev. 3:22).*

God's Message to the Church of Ephesus

In this chapter we will examine the message given to the Ephesians. Recorded in bold, clear and sobering detail are:

1. God's commendation of the wonderful traits of the Ephesian believers.
2. God's condemnation of the single failure of the heart that seemingly negated the Church's wonderful works.

PERFECT LOVE -- THE HIGHEST LAW AND STRONGEST FORCE

3. God's warning of judgment for having left their first love and the commandment to repent.
4. God's gracious offer of forgiveness if true repentance is made.
5. God's wonderful promise of eternal life to the overcomer.

Rev. 2:1-5

1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write;

2 I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou can not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted.

*4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because **thou hast left thy first love.***

*5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, **and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.***

*4 But I have this complaint against you. **You don't love me or each other as you did at first!** NLT*

There were so many good things about the Church of Ephesus that it seems they were almost perfect. But the Lord said, "*I have somewhat against you*" -- only one thing against you: "***Thou hast left thy first love.***"

The Ephesians Church had done many things well:

1. They were commended for their labor: "*I know thy*

works, and thy labour.” The Church at Ephesus was hard working.

2. They were commended for their patience. God noted both the external works and their heart of longsuffering.
3. They stood for the truth and actively exposed false doctrine. For a church to mix a little error with truth is an unforgivable sin that causes people to be deceived and lost.
4. They were commended for removing false teachers from their congregation.

A Single Failure of the Heart Brought God's Displeasure and Reproof

Their one fault began in their heart. The Lord can do without our achievements, but not without our love. The saints at Ephesus are not reprimanded with having changed their doctrinal views. But Jesus placed His finger on their heart and said: “There has been a change here.”

The greatest challenge of Christians is to guard their heart: “*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*” (Prov. 4:23).

Jer. 17:9-10

9 The heart is the most deceitful thing there is and desperately wicked. No one can really know how bad it is!

10 Only the Lord knows! He searches all hearts and examines deepest motives so he can give to each person his right reward, according to his deeds - how he has lived. TLB

We must pray every day for God to search our hearts and then repent and turn away from any defects He reveals:

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- When our work for God becomes routine and motivated out of duty, there is cause for repentance.
- When we seek recognition or promotion of self, there is cause for repentance.
- When we have not worked to restore fractured relationships, especially those in the brotherhood, there is cause for repentance.
- When we are judgmental and criticize others, especially those in the household of faith, there is cause for repentance.
- When we are not submissive to our leaders, there is cause for repentance.
- **God cares more about our character and conduct than about our position and work in the Church.**

To be pleasing to God we must excel in love -- God's perfect love. Love has the greatest value to God.

God's Warning of Judgment

God warned the Church of Ephesus: "Repent and make a change or I will remove thy candlestick out of its place." The warning for this infraction was both serious and severe and the implications clear:

- All of your many good works are worthless, if not motivated and done with God's love.
- If you do not repent and return to a love that is acceptable to Me, I will turn your light into darkness.

- **This judgment pronounced by God (their light turned to darkness) sends a fearful message of one being eternally lost.**

If God will put out our light simply because we do not love Him and others, we should closely examine this message.

- **Like the saints of the Ephesus Church, we may feel very secure in our doctrine and work for God. But we must make sure that we have a true love for God and others, *especially those in the household of faith -- the body of Christ.***

Since they loved to work for God and protect the truth of God's Word, it appeared that they loved Him. They thought their actions of service were proof of their love for God and others. To avoid a similar misconception, we should study the Scriptures for a greater understanding of God's perfect love.

Scripture declares that the only way to really love God is to love others. To the extent that we love God's children is the measure to which we love our heavenly Father.

The mission of an Apostolic Church is to reach the lost world through **evangelism**. But evangelism is effective only as there is a **revival of love** for one another in the body of Christ.

Loving God and loving our brother are completely and indivisibly linked, because our love for God is manifested by our love for our brother.

** * * * **

“First love” is flowing the perfect love of God, received from the perfect Head of the body, first to the body of Christ, of which every believer is a part. And in the measure we flow God’s perfect love to the brotherhood, we send it back to the source – our heavenly Father.

** * * * **

Just as faith without works is dead, love without works is dead. Love in deed is love indeed.

4. “*First Love*” Is Love for the Body of Christ

The last voice of the Bible was penned by Apostle John, now an elderly man on the isle of Patmos. In this last book, the book of Revelation, he identified the potentially fatal flaw in the Church of Ephesus -- “*You have left your **first love**.*” His writings warned them to repent and do their first works or their light would be turned to darkness by God.

It would be very convenient to accept the principle that “**first love**” refers only to our love for God, because loving Him is not difficult. He is magnificent, loving, kind, gracious, merciful, and beautiful. He is longsuffering, forgiving and everything wonderful. He is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, infinite, indescribable, immeasurable and so much more. He holds our very breath and life in His hand and will be our Judge at the end of our sojourn.

PERFECT LOVE -- THE HIGHEST LAW AND STRONGEST FORCE

Serving, worshipping and loving God must be our first priority. But the pre-condition to fully loving God is to first love our brother. Jesus demands such and accepts us as His disciples only as we love one another -- the body of Christ.

Loving God and loving our brother are completely and indivisibly linked. Our love for God (*the invisible*) is manifested by our love for our brother (*the visible*), as shown by many Scriptures penned by the Apostle John.

1 John 4:20-21

*20 If anyone says, I love God, and detests his brother [in Christ], he is a liar; **for he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, Whom he has not seen.***

21 And this command (charge, order, injunction) we have from Him: that he who loves God shall love his brother [believer] also. AMP

“First love”, includes love for God and love for the brotherhood because both are a part of one body -- the body of Christ cannot be divided or separated.

Andrew Murray, a dynamic preacher from the 1800s declares that: “Our greatest gift to God is our personal holiness, which is attached to our love and unity within the body of Christ.”

Love for the brotherhood is emphasized here because:

(1) The Apostle John states that we cannot be in true fellowship with God if we do not love our brother: *"And this is his commandment: We must love one another, just as he commanded us. Those who obey God's commandments remain in fellowship with Him, and he with them"* (1 John 3:23-24). *NLT*

(2) Some believers proclaim their love for God, but often struggle with reconciliation of relationships within the brotherhood.

(3) It is sometimes believed in Christian circles that one can love God separately from loving his brother.

(4) It is the visible evidence of our love for God:
Your strong love for each other will prove to the world that you are my disciple (John 13:35). *TLB*

By this shall all [men] know that you are My disciples, if you love one another [if you keep on showing love among yourselves] (John 13:35). *AMP*

(5) A deficiency of love is possibly satan's greatest tool to disrupt unity and hinder Apostolic revival.

(6) Pursuing **perfect love** will produce **humility** in the brotherhood that creates *"one mind and one accord"* **unity** required for a book of Acts revival.

(7) Only the perfect love of God, growing and flowing in our lives, will allow us to reach our full potential for God's purpose and will for our lives.

(8) Any good or evil done to your brother, your heavenly Father considers it as having been done to Him. *“When you did it unto the least of these, **ye did it to me**”* (Matt. 25:40).

*He who oppresses the poor, reproaches, mocks, and **insults his Maker**, but he who is kind and merciful to the needy honors Him* (Prov. 14:31). AMP

*Mocking the poor is **mocking the God** who made them* (Prov. 17:5). TLB

(9) If your relationship with your brother is not right, your relationship with the Father is not right: *“Forgive us our sins, just as **we have forgiven those who have sinned against us**”* (Matt. 6:12). TLB

(10) Biblical **forgiveness involves reconciliation** of the relationship. Getting right with God includes getting right with your brother:

*So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and **be reconciled** to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God* (Matt. 5:23-24). NLT

*. . . Abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to this friend and **make things right**. Then and only then, come back and work things out with God* (Matt. 5:24). MSG

(11) When we act in an unloving way toward a brother (critical, judgmental, isolation, etc.) we are negatively affecting the body of Christ. And this causes a blockage in the flow of our love back to the Head of the body -- Jesus Christ:

"First Love" Is Love for the Body of Christ

*So that there should be no division or discord or lack of adaptation [of the parts of the body to each other], but the members all alike should have a mutual interest and care for one another. **Now you [collectively] are Christ's body and [individually] you are members of it**, each part severally and distinct [each with his own place and function] (1 Cor. 12:25, 27). AMP*

*Instead, we will **speak the truth in love**, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the **whole body fit together perfectly**. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the **whole body is healthy and growing and full of love** (Eph. 4:15-16). NLT*

- **When we love the brotherhood with the perfect love of God, we are actually loving God because He accepts it as having been done to Him. Our love to members of the body flows back to the Head of the body -- Jesus Christ.**
- **The message of perfect love is being continuously transmitted from the Head to the members of the body. May there be no blockage by individual members that creates a restriction of that flow to other members in the body of Christ and back to the Head.**

-- From The Bible Exposition Commentary

"If we love one another, God dwelleth in us" (1 John 4:12). We claim to have the love of God in our hearts, or that we are influenced and controlled by love. But however high and exalted that may seem to be as exercised toward God, it would be defective; it would not

exert a fair influence over us, unless it led us to **love our Christian brethren**. It would be like the love which we might profess to have for a father, if it did not lead us to love our brothers and sisters. Love to God is not complete, or fully developed, unless it leads those who profess to have it to **love each other**.

Love is a valid test of our fellowship and our sonship because "God is love." Love is part of the very being and nature of God. If we are united to God through faith in Christ, we share His nature. And since His nature is love, love is the test of the reality of our spiritual life. The person who does not have this divine kind of love has never entered into a personal, experiential knowledge of God. What he knows is in his head, but it has never gotten into his heart.¹

Stated in both the Old and New Testaments is the law that to do something good to God, it must be done to one of His children (discussed in Chapter 8.1). Our love for God is manifested by loving our brother.

Andrew Murray states in his book on humility: "What a solemn thought, that our love to God will be measured by our everyday interactions with men; and that our love to God will be found to be a delusion, except that its truth is proved in standing the test of daily life with our fellowmen."²

To better understand the context of the term, "**first love**" let's consider the following five key concepts:

(1) Jesus Christ Gave Us a Mark to Identify Us as His Disciples

Jesus said that all men would know that we were His disciples:

- Not by how we love those in our lost world,
- Not by how we love the doctrines of the church,
- Not even by how we love Him,

but by **how we love each other** (members of the body of Christ -- the brotherhood)!

Loving God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength is of utmost importance and is foundational to all Christian living and service. But He did not say this is the evidence that the world would know that we were His disciples. He said: *"I am giving a new commandment to you now -- love each other just as much as I love you. Your strong love for each other will prove to the world that you are my disciples."* (John 13:35).
TLB

Perfect love, described in First Corinthians Chapter 13, expresses action or a mode of being: e.g., is kind, is not rude, envious, haughty or boastful. **The recipient of these actions is our brother** (not God). **How can we be kind or not envious or boastful toward God?** We do it by first directing these actions of love to our brother (one of His children). It is then received by our heavenly Father as having been done to Him. This is discussed at length in Chapter 8.

1 John 4:21

The command we have from Christ is blunt: Loving God includes loving people. MSG

Gal. 5:14

*For the whole Law can be summed up in this **one command:**
“**Love others as you love yourself.**” TLB*

The New Testament stresses love for our brothers and sisters in the family of God more than love for God or others. There are approximately twice as many Scriptures relating to loving the brotherhood as there are for loving God. There are approximately seven times as many Scriptures for loving the brotherhood as there are for loving others.

- **Our love for God is manifested and measured by our love for the brotherhood. When God’s perfect love flows first within the family of God (the brotherhood), it is most effective in ministering to the needs of a lost world.**

The Church of Brotherly Love

The Church of Philadelphia was known as the church of brotherly love. It was the only one of the seven churches where no fault was identified. If there were faults in it of common infirmity, love covered such faults.

Rev. 3:7-8, 10

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.

8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.

10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

- **It should be noted that the Church of Ephesus, with the most scathing rebuke by God, was the one that had left their "first love". And the Church of Philadelphia with no faults identified and promised an open door was the church of brotherly love.**

May we be known as the **"church of brotherly love"** which has complete access to the many things that God's "open door" provides:

- (1) The open access to God's vast resources of miraculous power and authority to do His will and work.
- (2) The open door to proclaim God's Word to a lost world, with assurance that the powers of satan's kingdom cannot stop us.
- (3) The open door to shelter and protection from the storm of the ages, breaking upon this endtime generation.
- (4) The open door of entrance to the eternal city, as we hold fast to God's divine love.

(2) The Paramount Importance of the Brotherhood -- the Church -- God's Masterpiece

At creation, man (not the universe) was God's greatest treasure. But God's greatest design, His masterpiece, was created 4,000 years later: ***"The church of God which He purchased with His own blood"*** (Acts 20:28).

Our heavenly Father elevates His Church, His Bride, above all others: *"Now you are no longer strangers to God and foreigners to heaven, but you are members of God's very own family, citizens of God's country, and you belong in God's household with every other Christian"* (Eph. 2:19). TLB

Creation of the massive, measureless universe is referenced in Scripture to illustrate the greatness and power of our supernatural God. However, God places a much greater emphasis on the love and redemption of His chosen people - Israel in the Old Testament and His Church in the New Testament.

There are more stars in the universe than there are grains of sand on the sea shores. The visible universe contains 30 billion, trillion stars. But only five words in Scripture were used to describe their creation: "*And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: **he made the stars also***" (Gen. 1:16). But God took Moses to the top of Mount Sinai and used many chapters to tell him how to make a tabernacle which was a foreshadowing of His redemption plan for mankind.

A significant theme of the Old Testament is God's plan of redemption and looking forward when He would replace Moses' Tabernacle, to dwell in our tabernacle of clay. The major theme of the New Testament is redemption, the story of love, with God coming to this earth, in human form, to suffer and die in our place: "*No one has greater love than to lay down (give up) his own life for his friends*" (John 15:13).
AMP

The universe is magnificent and fathomless and is a witness of our omnipotent, supernatural God. But it did not cost Him anything to create the universe. However, to redeem us, He had to come to earth, tabernacled in human flesh, to die for our sins.

The divine love of Jesus Christ was costly. The unfathomable price was paid with His indescribable suffering and His precious blood:

<i>Acts 20:38</i>	<i>The church of God which He purchased with His own blood.</i>
<i>Eph. 1:7</i>	<i>In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.</i>
<i>Col. 1:14</i>	<i>In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.</i>
<i>Heb. 9:12</i>	<i>Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.</i>
<i>1 Peter 1:18-19</i>	<i>Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.</i>

His supreme sacrifice enabled us to be born again and become sons of God. A new birth into the Kingdom of God provided us the wonderful privilege to become a part of His most prized creation:

- The family of God, the household of faith.
- The brotherhood, the Bride of Christ.
- The New Testament Church.

- **Love within the brotherhood is stressed more than any other love in the New Testament because the church is God's most prized masterpiece. Scripture makes it very clear that our heavenly Father demands that His children demonstrate His perfect love -- working together in love, humility and unity.**

-- From Matthew Henry's Commentary

Shall we refuse to love those whom the eternal God hath loved? We should be admirers of his love, and lovers of his love (of the benevolence and complacency that are in him), and consequently lovers of those whom he loves. The general love of God to the world should induce a universal love among mankind. The peculiar love of God to the church and to the saints should be productive of a peculiar love there: If God so loved us, we ought surely to love one another. The Christian love is an assurance of the divine inhabitation: *"If we love one another, God dwelleth in us"* (1 John 4:12).³

John 15:12-13 Jesus' words

*12 I demand that you love each other as much as I love you.
13 And here is how to measure it - the greatest love is shown when a person lays down his life for his friends. TLB*

1 Peter 3:8

*And now this word to all of you: You should be like **one big happy family**, full of sympathy toward each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds. TLB*

Heb. 10:24

And let us consider and give attentive, continuous care to watching over one another, studying how we may stir up

"First Love" Is Love for the Body of Christ

(stimulate and incite) to love and helpful deeds and noble activities. AMP

1 Peter 1:22

Show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply with all your heart. NLT

1 John 3:18

Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. NLT

This commandment by our heavenly Father to love each other, as He has loved us, should not be burdensome because we all share a common mission against a common enemy. And we all look forward, by faith, to the day we all shall live together in that wonderful place prepared by the Father for His children.

(3) Jesus Christ is the Head of the Body -- the Church

Col. 1:18

He is the Head of the body made up of his people -- that is, his Church which he began; and he is the Leader of all those who arise from the dead, so that he is first in everything. TLB

Col. 2:19

Christ puts us together in one piece, whose very breath and blood flow through us. He is the Head and we are the body. We can grow up healthy in God only as he nourishes us. MSG

Eph. 1:22-23

22 God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church.

23 And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself. NLT

Eph. 5:23

*For the husband is the head of the wife, even as **Christ is the head of the church**: and he is the saviour of the body.*

(4) Every Believer is a Member of the Body of Christ

Strategically inserted between the discourse on the nine wonderful gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4-11) and the love chapter (1 Cor. 13:1-13), Apostle Paul thoroughly emphasizes the importance of love within the brotherhood by using the analogy of the human body compared to the body of Christ:

1 Cor. 12:13-14, 18, 20-21, 25-27

*13 For by [means of the personal agency of] one [Holy] Spirit we were all, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, baptized [and by baptism united together] into **one body**, and all made to drink of **one [Holy] Spirit**.*

14 For the body does not consist of one limb or organ but of many.

*18 But as it is, **God has placed and arranged the limbs and organs in the body**, each [particular one] of them, just as He wished and saw fit and with the best adaptation.*

20 And now there are [certainly] many limbs and organs, but a single body.

21 And the eye is not able to say to the hand, I have no need of you, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

25 So that there should be no division or discord or lack of adaptation [of the parts of the body to each other], but the

members all alike should have a mutual interest and care for one another.

26 And if one member suffers, all the parts [share] the suffering; if one member is honored, all the members [share in] the enjoyment of it.

27 Now you [collectively] are Christ's body and [individually] you are members of it, each part severally and distinct [each with his own place and function]. AMP

Eph. 4:15-16

*15 Instead, we will **speak the truth in love**, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.*

*16 He makes the **whole body fit together perfectly**. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love. NLT*

This analogy of the human body to the body of Christ is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7: "Unity the Key to Another Pentecost."

When we completely understand the awesome privilege to belong to the body of Christ, we will treat other members of the body with utmost tender loving care, because:

- When we exhibit perfect love to a member of the body we also benefit, because we are a part of that body. The body is edified with the life-giving perfect love of God flowing through it.
- When we act in an unloving way (critical or judgmental remarks, avoiding interaction with a brother, etc.), we are also affecting the whole body of which we are a part.

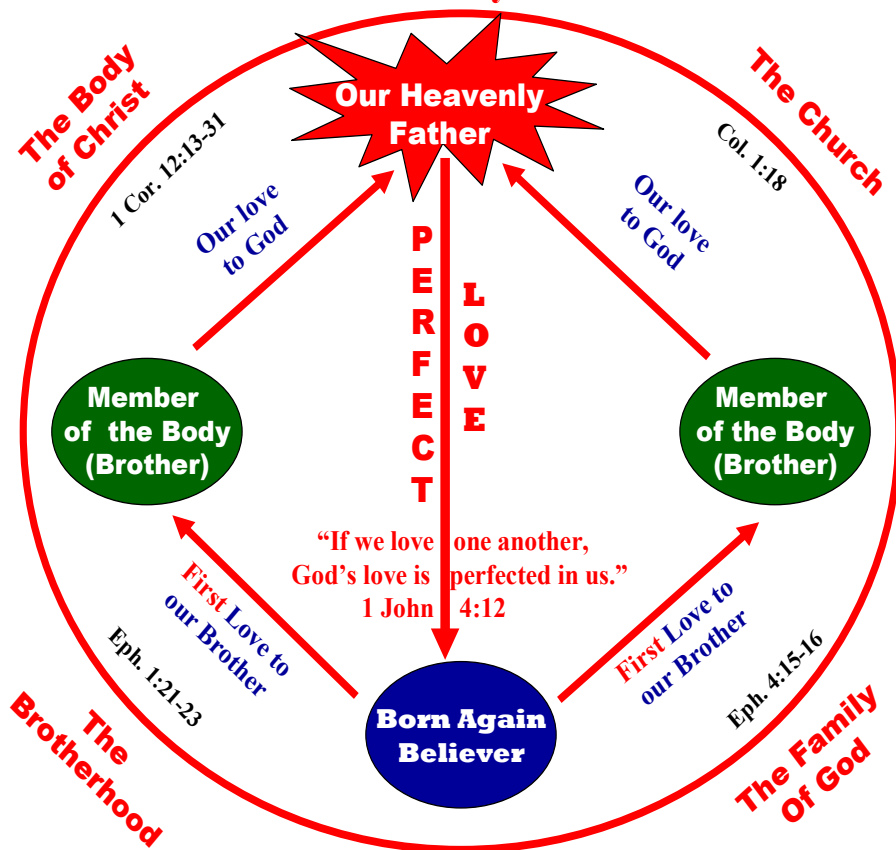
PERFECT LOVE -- THE HIGHEST LAW AND STRONGEST FORCE

This causes a blockage in the flow of our love back to the Head of the body, Jesus Christ. The body is affected and its effectiveness diminished. Refer to Chart N-5 on the following page.

"First Love" Is Love for the Body of Christ

Chart N-5

Our Love to God is Measured by Our Love to Our Brother



Our love to God is manifest and measured by our love to the brotherhood.

When love **FIRST flows within the family of God, the brotherhood, it is then most effective in ministering to the needs of our lost world !**

Christ puts us together in one piece, whose very breath and blood flow through us. He is the Head and we are the body. (Col. 2:19) MSG

There should be no division or discord or lack of adaptation [of the parts of the body to each other]. (1 Cor. 12:25) AMP

Do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. (Gal. 6:10)

I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. (Rev. 2:4)

Abusing Your Body

No normal person would intentionally inflict an injury to themselves by cutting a foot deeply because the rest of the body would suffer.

Eph. 5:29

No one abuses his own body, does he? No, he feeds and pampers it. That's how Christ treats us, the church, since we are part of his body. MSG

-- From The Wikipedia On-line Dictionary

Self-harm is a symptom of borderline personality disorder. Although suicide is not the intention of self-harm, the relationship between self-harm and suicide is complex, as self-harming behavior may be potentially life-threatening. Self-harm is also apparent in high-functioning individuals who have no underlying clinical diagnosis.⁴

- **Just as self-harm is a sign of a serious personality disorder in a natural body, any harm (unkind word or deed) to a member of the body of Christ indicates a serious spiritual disorder.**

(5) Apostle John Declares That the Love of God is Perfected Only as We Love the Brotherhood

The Apostle John provides insight to the definition of “**first love**” in his first epistle when he declares that: “*If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us*” (1 John 4:12).

John, also called John the Beloved, was referred to five times as, “*The disciple whom Jesus loved*” -- the one closest in

relationship to Jesus. As we review the Scriptures regarding love, it is apparent that John had a grasp and passion for this subject.

John recorded the words of Jesus regarding God's love for us and His commandment for us to love one another. However, John's writings about love deal almost exclusively with loving the brotherhood (members of the body of Christ).

- **John declares that it is impossible to love God whom we have not seen if we don't love our brother whom we have seen.**

1 John 4:12, 20-21

*12 No man has at any time seen God. **But if we love one another, God abides (lives and remains) in us and His love (that love which is essentially His) is brought to completion (to its full maturity, runs its full course, is perfected) in us!***

*20 If anyone says, I love God, and hates (detests) his brother [in Christ], he is a liar; for **he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, Whom he has not seen.***

21 And this command (charge, order, injunction) we have from Him: that he who loves God shall love his brother [believer] also. AMP

-- From The Pulpit Commentary

"No man has at any time seen God" Why does St. John introduce this statement here? Not, of course, as implying that to love an invisible Being is impossible; but that the only security for genuine and lasting love in such a case is to love that which visibly represents him. Seeing that God is invisible, his abiding in us can be shown only by his essential characteristic being

exhibited in us, i.e., by our showing similar self-sacrificing love. **Our love towards God is perfected and brought to maturity by the exercise of love towards our brethren.**⁵

Refer to Chart N-6 “God’s Love Is Perfected in Us as We Love Our Brother”, in Appendix 1.

Conclusion

God’s perfect love flows to us from the Head of the body -- Jesus Christ. Just as our human body (compared by Apostle Paul to members in the body of Christ) is comprised of many members with different functions, the life-giving nutrients must flow to all the members of the body. When there is a restriction in the flow, the body is negatively affected.

- **“First love” is flowing the perfect love of God, received from the Head of the body, to the brotherhood, the body of Christ. And in the measure we flow God’s perfect love to the brotherhood, we flow it back to the source - - our heavenly Father.**

Pastor and district superintendent, Rev. Mark Morgan, confirmed in a recent conference message what I have concluded from my studies regarding the term, **“first love”**. He stated: “After studying for many hours the term **‘first love’** and related Scriptures, I have come to the conclusion that it refers to our love for our brothers in Christ -- the brotherhood.”

Refer to the following for a discussion of topics related to love for the brotherhood:

Chapter 5 “Loving the Brotherhood”

"First Love" Is Love for the Body of Christ

Chapter 8.1 "Anything (Good or Evil) Done to a Brother
-- the Father Considers It as Done to Him"

Chapter 8.2 "If Your Relationship With Your Brother is
Not Right -- Your Relationship With the
Father is Not Right"

Apostle John, in his writings regarding relationship with our brother, cites the first murder in the Bible. While we may not physically kill a brother, we can destroy his influence by being judgmental or saying harmful things. And our Father will be equally angry with us as He was with Cain when he killed his brother. (1 John 3:10-12)

5. *Loving the Brotherhood*

The Bible uses many terms in the New Testament to describe this special select group of believers who comprise the body of Christ. Some of these terms include: “the household of faith”, “fellow believers”, “brethren”, “disciples”, “family”, “body of Christ”, “chosen generation”, “royal priesthood”, “holy nation”, “peculiar people”, “bride of Christ”, “one body”, “members of the body” and “the brotherhood”.

This chapter addresses exclusively our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ, since our heavenly Father elevates His Church, His Bride, above all other people.

If you will obey My voice in truth and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own peculiar possession and treasure from among and above all peoples (Ex. 19:5). AMP

Therefore you are no longer outsiders (exiles, migrants, and aliens, excluded from the rights of citizens), but you

now share citizenship with the saints (God's own people, consecrated and set apart for Himself); and you belong to God's [own] household (Eph. 2:19). AMP

You are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God (1 Peter 2:9). NLT

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Gal. 3:26-27).

And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves (1 Peter 4:8).

So then, as occasion and opportunity open up to us, let us do good to all people. Be mindful to be a blessing, especially to those of the household of faith [those who belong to God's family with you, the believers] (Gal. 6:10). AMP

Show respect for all men [treat them honorably]. Love the brotherhood (the Christian fraternity of which Christ is the Head). Reverence God. Honor the emperor (1 Peter 2:17). AMP

-- From Matthew Henry's Commentary

(1.) Honour all men. A due respect is to be given to all men (2.) **Love the brotherhood.** All Christians are a fraternity, united to Christ the head, alike disposed and qualified, nearly related in the same interest, having communion one with another, and going to the same home; they should therefore love one another with an especial affection. (3.) Fear God with the highest

reverence, duty, and submission; if this be wanting, none of the other three duties can be performed as they ought. (4.) Honour the king with that highest honour that is peculiarly due to him above other men.¹

As discussed in the prior chapter, there is a higher order than loving a lost world -- loving the brotherhood. The Lord Jesus Christ gave us a distinguishing characteristic as a witness to the world that we are His disciples: ***“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”*** (John 13:35).

- **Above our love for a lost world, our love for a successful church, or our love for our own ministry, is a greater priority. That is a love for our brothers and sisters -- members in the body of Christ.**

We need to love each other more. We have not fully loved until we have first loved the brotherhood. We have fulfilled the highest law when the perfect love of God pours out of us for the brotherhood, and we become willing, like Jesus taught in John 15:13, to give our life for our brother.

- **When the perfect love of God is flowing in the body of Christ, it is most effective in ministering to those bound in prisons of sin, sickness and abuse.**

5.1 John the Beloved -- the Last Voice of the Bible

John is distinguished above the other apostles as, *“The disciple whom Jesus loved.”* Five times in the book of John this title is used to refer to him. He was one of the three permitted to witness Christ’s glory upon the Mount of Transfiguration and His agony in Gethsemane. It was to his

care that Jesus entrusted His mother in His last hours of torture upon the cross.

His love for the Master motivated him to brave the dangers of the judgment hall, after the other disciples had fled. He lingered at the cross -- watching in anguish as the One he loved with all of his heart suffered and died.

At the tidings that Christ had risen, John hastened to the sepulcher, and in his zeal outran even the impetuous Peter. When he entered the empty tomb and saw the grave clothes, he believed. He was the only disciple who believed that Jesus had risen from the dead until Jesus appeared alive to the eleven. John's deep love for Christ drew him to always be near Him.

John received the greatest revelation of Jesus, which is unveiled in the book of Revelation. **Increased relationship will always bring greater revelation.**

-- From "The Apostle John"

There is a church tradition, which says, that when John was evidently an old man in Ephesus, he had to be carried to the church in the arms of his disciples. At these meetings, he was accustomed to say no more than, **"Little children, love one another!"** After a time, the disciples wearied at always hearing the same words, asked, "Master, why do you always say this?" **"It is the Lord's command,"** was his reply. **"And if this alone be done, it is enough!"**²

John recorded only a few verses related to our love for God. However, his extensive writings regarding love pertain to loving the brotherhood.

John Records Jesus Teaching Love for the Brotherhood

Jesus and His disciples had finished the last supper. Judas had left to make arrangements with the high priest for the betrayal of Jesus. The final message of Jesus to the disciples, before His death, commanded them to, **“Love each other as much as I have loved you.”**

John 13:34-35

34 I give you a new commandment: that you should love one another. Just as I have loved you, so you too should love one another.

35 By this shall all [men] know that you are My disciples, if you love one another [if you keep on showing love among yourselves]. AMP

John 15:9, 12-13

9 I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Live within my love.

12 I demand that you love each other as much as I love you.

13 And here is how to measure it -- the greatest love is shown when a person lays down his life for his friends. TLB

John's Writings Regarding Love For the Brotherhood

1 John 2:4-5, 9-11

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

*5 But whoso keepeth his word, **in him verily is the love of God***

perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

*10 He **that loveth his brother abideth in the light**, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.*

11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

1 John 3:10-12, 14-15, 18, 23-24

*10 So now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil. Anyone who does not live righteously and **does not love other believers does not belong to God.***

*11 This is the message you have heard from the beginning: **We should love one another.***

*12 We must not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and **killed his brother.** MSG*

On the subject of loving our brother, Apostle John cites the first murder in the Bible. While we may not physically kill a brother, we can destroy his influence by being judgmental or saying harmful things. And our Father will be equally angry with us as He was with Cain when he killed his brother.

14 If we love our Christian brothers and sisters, it proves that we have passed from death to life. But a person who has no love is still dead.

*15 **Anyone who hates another brother or sister is really a murderer at heart.** And you know that murderers don't have eternal life within them.*

*18 Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; **let us show the truth by our actions.***

23 *And this is his commandment: We must believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, **and love one another, just as he commanded us.***

24 *Those who **obey God's commandments** remain in fellowship with him, and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the Spirit he gave us lives in us. NLT*

Rev. 2:4

*But I have this complaint against you. **You don't love me or each other as you did at first!** NLT*

Additional Scriptures: 1 John 4:7-13, 16, 19-21, 1 John 5:2-3, 2 John 4-6.

5.2 Other New Testament Writers

Apostles Paul and Peter record the command of God to love others -- but foremost to love the brotherhood (*especially those of the household of faith*).

Rom. 12:9-10

9 *Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good.*

10 *Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. NLT*

1 Cor. 13:13

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

Eph. 4:2, 16, 30-32

2 *With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;*

16 *From whom the whole body fitly joined together and*

PERFECT LOVE -- THE HIGHEST LAW AND STRONGEST FORCE

compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Col. 3:13-14

13 Be gentle and ready to forgive; never hold grudges. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

*14 Most of all, **let love guide your life**, for then the whole church will stay together in perfect harmony. TLB*

1 Peter 1:22

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.

1 Peter 3:8-9

*8 Finally, all [of you] should be of one and the same mind **(united in spirit)**, sympathizing [with one another], **loving [each other] as brethren [of one household], compassionate and courteous (tenderhearted and humble).***

*9 Never return evil for evil or insult for insult (scolding, tongue-lashing, berating), but on the contrary blessing [praying for their welfare, happiness, and protection, and truly pitying and loving them]. For know that **to this you have been called**, that you may yourselves inherit a blessing [from God — that you may obtain a blessing as heirs, bringing welfare and happiness and protection]. AMP*

2 Peter 1:4-8, 10-11

4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be **partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

7 And to godliness **brotherly kindness**; and to brotherly kindness **charity**.

8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Having brotherly kindness and charity (verse 7), refers to making our calling and election sure (verse 10) for entrance into the everlasting Kingdom (verse 11).

10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to **make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:**

11 For so an **entrance** shall be ministered unto you abundantly **into the everlasting kingdom** of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Additional Scriptures: Eph. 5:13, Phil. 2:1-2, Col. 2:2, 1 Thess. 1:2-3, 1 Thess. 3:12, 1 Thess. 4:9-10, 2 Thess. 1:3, Heb. 10:24-25, Heb. 13:1, 1 Peter 4:7-8.

Conclusion

The brotherhood is connected as members of one body. And as believers we are the body of Christ (the church) -- with Jesus Christ as the Head.

When we are flowing the perfect love of Christ to the brotherhood, it flows back to the Head and we are loving God in return with His perfect love. But, if there is a breach in our relationship with a fellow member, there is a restriction in the flow of perfect love in the body of Christ. And this also impairs the flow of our love to the Head of the body, Jesus Christ.

Refer to Chart N-5, "Our Love to God is Measured by Our Love to Our Brother", in Appendix 1.

Consider the following related Scriptures regarding loving your brother. Could it be true that if we don't love our brother, we are cursed by the Father with the same curse as not loving Him?

1 John 4:20-21

20 If anyone says, I love God, and hates (detests, abominates) his brother [in Christ], he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, Whom he has not seen.

21 And this command (charge, order, injunction) we have from Him: that he who loves God shall love his brother [believer] also. AMP

Loving the Brotherhood

John 15:12

I demand that you love each other as much as I love you.

1 Peter 3:8

And now this word to all of you: You should be like one big happy family, full of sympathy toward each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds. TLB

1 Peter 4:8

And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves.

1 Cor. 16:22

If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. NKJV

It is a great contradiction to speak of daily fellowship with a despised and rejected Christ, and of bearing His cross, if the meek and lowly, kind and gentle humility of the Lamb is scarcely evident in our daily lives.¹

** * * * **

What a solemn thought, that our love to God will be measured by our everyday interactions with men and the humility it displays; and that our love to God will be found to be a delusion, except that its truth is proved in standing the test of daily life with our fellowmen.¹

** * * * **

So much as you have of pride within you, you have of the fallen angels alive in you; so much as you have of true humility, so much you have of the Lamb of God within you.³

6. Humility Created by Perfect Love -- the Key to Unity

An essential requirement vital for unity to operate in the church is genuine humility. The understanding and practice of biblical humility is the key to spiritual growth.

The dictionary defines humility as, “modesty, believing that we are not superior to others, the act or posture of lowering oneself in relation to others, meekness.” True worship is humbling ourselves to the lowest state while exalting God to the highest; the difference between the two is the measure of our worship.

Saint Augustine stated: “It was **pride** that changed angels into devils; it is **humility** that makes men as angels.”

To begin the discussion of “humility”, let’s tap into the insight and perspective of an author from the 1800s, to help establish the critical importance of this subject.

-- From “**Humility**”

In the daily interactions of the home and social life, in the more special fellowship with Christians, in the direction and performance of work for Christ, -- alas! how much proof there is that humility is not esteemed the cardinal virtue. Meekness and lowliness of heart are the chief mark by which they who follow the meek and lowly Lamb of God are to be known.

What a solemn thought, that our love to God will be measured by our everyday interactions with men and the humility it displays; and that our love to God will be found to be a delusion, except that its truth is proved in standing the test of daily life with our fellowmen.

It is easy to think we humble ourselves before God. **Humility towards men will be the only sufficient proof that our humility before God is real**; that humility has taken up its abode in us; and become our very nature; that we actually, like Christ, have made ourselves of no reputation.

And so **pride, or the loss of this humility, is the root of every sin and evil.**¹

Pride (the Opposite of Humility) Is Listed With the Sins of the Flesh

Pride is the opposite of humility, modesty, and meekness. It is listed with the worst of sins (sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, *pride . . .*).

Mark 7:21-23

21 For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder,

*22 adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, **pride**, and foolishness.*

23 All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you. NLT

God Hates Pride and Rewards Humility

King Solomon gives us a summary of what God hates -- and the first thing at the top of the list is “pride.” *“These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him. A **proud look**, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood” (Prov. 6:16-17).*

Psalms 18:27

*You deliver the **humble** but condemn the **proud** and haughty ones. TLB*

1 Peter 5:5

*All of you serve each other with **humble** spirits, for God gives special blessings to those who are **humble**, but sets himself against those who are **proud**. TLB*

When we consider how much God hates pride, it should cause us to ask God in prayer every day to search our hearts to reveal and remove any trace of pride.

R.T. Kindall lists some of the traits of a life when it is void of self-righteousness (pride): “First, peace will flow through us. When peace is absent, something is wrong. The un-grieved Spirit is recognizable by peace. Second, there is an absence of judgmentalism. Third, we experience pleasantness. We feel

pleasant, and we are pleasant to live with. Fourth, we will love people -- even those who injure us. Fifth, God will become more real to us and fresh insights to the Scripture will occur.”

James 3:17-18

17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

Humility Brings Death to Self

Humility is the path of death to self. In death to self, humility is perfected. Jesus humbled Himself unto death, and patterned humility in which we too must walk: “*And after He had appeared in human form, He abased and humbled Himself [still further] and carried His obedience to the extreme of death, even the death of the cross*” (Phil. 2:8). AMP

- **It is a great contradiction to speak of daily fellowship with a despised and rejected Christ, and of bearing His cross, if the meek and lowly, kind and gentle humility of the Lamb is scarcely evident in our daily lives.¹**

Humility will lead to death of self as we follow in the footsteps of the master Teacher and become His true disciple. Self encompasses all the evils of our fallen nature.

When Apostle Paul declared, “***I die daily***”, he was not struggling with sin; he was battling self -- the process of self decreasing and of Christ increasing. To have God’s favor we too must submit ourselves to the brutal process of self-demotion and Christ’s promotion:

- Less of my will and more of His.
- Less of my mind and more of His.
- Less of my limited human love and more of His.

Self-denial and its resulting humility is the downward path taught by Jesus for promotion: *“And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall **humble** himself shall be exalted”* (Matt. 23:12). Apostle James declares that going down in God’s Kingdom actually leads up: *“**Humble** yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up”* (James 4:10).

“Self is the whole evil of fallen nature; self-denial is our capacity of being saved -- humility is our savior. Self is the root, the branches, the tree, of all the evil of our fallen state. All the evils of fallen angels and men have their birth in the pride of self. On the other hand, all the virtues of the heavenly life are the virtues of humility. The great struggle for eternal life lies in the strife between pride and humility. **Pride and humility are the two master powers, the two kingdoms in strife for the eternal possession of man.**”²

Refer to Chart F-3, “The Path to the Supernatural -- He Must Increase, but I Must Decrease”, in Appendix 1.

The ambition to be great is a very common weakness in our human nature. The carnal nature of man craves greatness, to be first, to be the king (no matter how small the kingdom). It craves power, to execute its own agenda and plans, to control men and circumstances. This appeals to the natural man, but it is so devastating and destructive to the spiritual man. The only cure for these selfish desires is genuine humility -- created by God’s perfect love working in our lives.

Genuine humility requires a constant willingness to deny self and be critical of one's self. Apostle Paul explained to the Church in Philippi the basic requirement for humility: *"Esteeming and treating others better than ourselves."*

- **In our kingdom there are two sides to a conflict; in God's Kingdom, there is only one -- the "humble side". If we don't choose humility, He will humble us.**

The Humility of Jesus Christ Is Our Example

God coming to the earth in human form exemplified humility in its purest form. He descended from the highest of heaven's glory to the lowest of earth's estate.

The descent from His heavenly throne to His birth in extreme unfavorable conditions in an animal stable is an incalculable distance. The Bible makes it clear that He came "down" from the very highest to the very lowest.

He descended to a tiny speck in the universe called the Milky Way Galaxy, further down to the outer perimeter of the Galaxy to a tiny speck -- our solar system. He came down further to a small speck in our solar system called earth -- then to the little town of Bethlehem: *"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting"* (Micah 5:2).

The One worthy of all worship and the source of all power was born as a helpless baby in a dirty animal stable. Jesus never stopped descending and humbling Himself.

- The King of kings became a servant to all.

Humility Created by Perfect Love -- the Key to Unity

- The source of all Truth was falsely accused and judged guilty of blasphemy.
- The Creator of all things was spit on by His creation.
- The source and giver of life was crucified on a cross and died in agony, bleeding and gasping for air.
- The One who possessed everything became poor so that we could be rich.

2 Cor. 8:9

Though he was so very rich, yet to help you he became so very poor, so that by being poor he could make you rich. TLB

In Christ's humility He exemplified and modeled for us what it means to possess true humility. He showed us that to attain greatness, we must descend (not ascend).

Phil. 2:3-5, 7-8

3 In the true spirit of humility (lowliness of mind) let each regard the others as better than and superior to himself [thinking more highly of one another than you do of yourselves].

4 Let each of you esteem and look upon and be concerned for not [merely] his own interests, but also each for the interests of others.

5 Let this same attitude and purpose and [humble] mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus: [Let Him be your example in humility:]

7 He stripped Himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity], so as to assume the guise of a servant (slave).

*8 And after He appeared in human form, He **abased and humbled Himself** [still further] and carried His obedience to the extreme of death, even the death of the cross! AMP*

Humility Quotes

“No matter what anyone has done to you, always take the humble side.” (Bishop James L. Kilgore)

“Humility is to make a right estimate of one’s self.” (Charles Spurgeon)

“Humility is the gateway into the grace and the favor of God.” (Harold Warner)

“I believe the first test of a truly great man is in his humility.” (John Ruskin)

“To test a man’s humility do not investigate if he ignores applause; find out how he abides criticism.” (Franz Grillparzer)

“Humility is the foundation of all the other virtues hence, in the soul in which this virtue does not exist, there cannot be any other virtue except in mere appearance.” (Saint Augustine)

“In heaven and earth, pride, self-exaltation, is the gate and the birth and the curse of hell.” (Andrew Murray)

Humility Taught in the Old Testament

Moses, Job, King David, King Solomon, Isaiah and Micah stressed God's demand for His people to live in humility:

<i>Deut. 8:2</i>	<i>God led thee forty years in the wilderness to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know whether thou wouldest keep his commandments.</i>
<i>2 Chron. 7:14</i>	<i>If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, then will I hear from heaven and heal their land.</i>
<i>2 Chron. 34:27</i>	<i>Because thou didst humble thyself . . . I have heard thee.</i>
<i>Job 22:29</i>	<i>He shall save the humble person.</i>
<i>Psalms 9:12</i>	<i>He forgetteth not the cry of the humble.</i>
<i>Psalms 10:12, 17</i>	<i>Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up thine hand: forget not the humble. Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear:</i>
<i>Psalms 37:11</i>	<i>But all who humble themselves before the Lord shall be given every blessing and shall have wonderful peace. TLB</i>

PERFECT LOVE -- THE HIGHEST LAW AND STRONGEST FORCE

<i>Prov. 22:4</i>	<i>True humility and respect for the Lord lead a man to riches, honor, and long life. TLB</i>
<i>Prov. 29:23</i>	<i>A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.</i>
<i>Isa. 2:17</i>	<i>And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.</i>
<i>Isa. 57:15</i>	<i>For thus saith the high and lofty One I dwell in the high and holy place with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit.</i>
<i>Isa. 66:2</i>	<i>My hands have made both heaven and earth; they and everything in them are mine. I, the Lord, have spoken! "I will bless those who have humble and contrite hearts, who tremble at my word. NLT</i>
<i>Micah 6:8</i>	<i>What doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?</i>

Humility Commanded in the New Testament

The New Testament writers declared that **humility** is the only way to become great in God's eyes. Downward mobility is not just the best of many paths a Christian can take to gain God's favor -- it is the only one.

Humility Created by Perfect Love -- the Key to Unity

Rom. 12:10

Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

Eph. 4:1-2

1 Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.

2 Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. NLT

Eph. 5:21

Honor Christ by submitting to each other. TLB

1 Peter 5:5-6

5 All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

Additional Scriptures: Phil. 2:3, Col. 3:12, James 4:6, 10.

Jesus' Teachings of Humility

Christ's humility modeled for us how to duplicate His supernatural ministry. This display of Christ's humility and love shook the empire of His day and is still working through believers who will follow the path of self-abasement and humility.

When the disciples asked Jesus who was the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven, He called a little child and put him in the

midst of them. Then He told His disciples unless they were converted and become as little children they could by no means enter the Kingdom of heaven. He then stated that whoever humbles himself as a child is the greatest in the kingdom.

Matt. 18:6, 8-9

6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

8 Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.

9 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

-- From The Bible Exposition Commentary

Humility begins with self-examination, and it continues with self-denial. Jesus was not suggesting that we maim our bodies, for harming our physical bodies can never change the spiritual condition of our hearts. Rather, He was instructing us to perform “spiritual surgery” on ourselves, removing anything that causes us to stumble or that causes others to stumble. The humble person lives for Jesus first and others next. He puts himself last. He is happy to deprive himself even of good things, if it will benefit others.³

Additional Scriptures: Matt. 5:3, Matt. 18:1-5, Matt. 20:25-28, Matt. 23:12, Mark 9:35, Luke 14:11, Luke 18:14.

M. Pool states: "Jesus teaches in this passage: (1) The necessity of humility to enter the Kingdom of God. (2) How abominable in the eyes of God are ambition and pride in anyone. (3) In the Church the way to be great is to be humble. (4) That true humility consists in a mean opinion of ourselves, not being wise in our own conceits, in honour preferring one another."

Humility is the greatest virtue central to everything good. Humility means putting God and others ahead of our own selfish interests. The song, "**J-O-Y**", we learned as children in Sunday school should be our motto to live by every day: "Jesus and others and you, what a wonderful way to spell **JOY**". "J" is for Jesus, for He has first place, "O" is for others, we meet face to face. "Y" is for you, in whatever you do, put yourself last and spell, **JOY**".

J. Vaughan, M. A. states: "(1) If you are humble before God, you will be humble before men. (2) Exercise inward discipline to stop the first budding of pride. (3) Do acts of humility. (4) God always empties before He fills; He will humble before He will use a person."

Humility Vs. Pride

From the world's perspective, the upward path of self-promotion is the preferred direction to go. In every human exist a proud ego reaching up for recognition, power and greatness. To the carnal man, humility is a brutal downward spiral to self-demotion. But the spiritual man understands that it leads to fulfillment, joy and promotion from the Father.

- **Pride, the loss of humility, is the root of every sin. This evil from hell is deeply innate in the heart of humanity.**

Without radical surgery by the Spirit to remove pride it will:

- Cause us to be critical and judgmental.
- Cause us to justify our unwillingness to initiate reconciliation of a relationship with a brother.
- Drain joy and fulfillment from our lives.
- Prevent spiritual growth.
- Greatly hinder the Great Commission of reaching souls.
- Jeopardize our most valuable gift of eternal life.

-- **From “The Spirit of Prayer”**

The truth is this: **Pride must die in you, or nothing of heaven can live in you.** Pride brings death, and humility brings life; the one is all evil, the other is all good. So much as you have of pride within you, you have of the fallen angels alive in you; so much as you have of true humility, so much you have of the Lamb of God within you.⁴

- **When we make critical remarks about a brother, a spirit of pride or self-righteousness is being asserted because it implies: “I am better than my brother.”**
- **Apostle Paul declares it is unwise to measure ourselves among ourselves. But when we use the Word of God to measure ourselves, we are quickly humbled with the understanding that we have a long way to go to be like Jesus.**
- **Humility is the only soil where the fruit of the Spirit will grow and the supernatural gifts of the Spirit will work.**

To conclude this discussion of “humility”, let’s review the anointed voice of Rev. Andrew Murray from the 1800s. He

holds nothing back in addressing the brutal, destructive and deadly sin of pride and the only remedy -- humility.

-- **From “Humility”**

The great test of whether the holiness we profess to seek or to attain, will be whether it be manifest in the increasing humility it produces. In the creature, humility is the one thing needed to allow God's holiness to dwell in him and shine through him.

The one infallible test of our holiness will be the humility before God and men which marks us. When the meek and lowly Lamb of God is truly formed within, there is given the **power of a perfect love** that forgets itself and finds its blessedness in blessing others, in bearing with them and honoring them, however feeble they be. Where the creature becomes nothing before God; it cannot be anything but humble towards the fellow-creature.⁵

- **PERFECT LOVE** creates **HUMILITY** and in turn produces **UNITY**, required for the complete restoration of Apostolic power, dominion and authority, with the unrestrained operation of the supernatural.

If unity brings the favor and power of God to His people, disunity brings God's disfavor and hinders His power among us.

** * * * **

Humility allows us to manage differences of opinion with caution and in the spirit of unity since we don't presume have the right answer to everything or even understand another person's perspective or thought process that has led to a different conclusion.¹

** * * * **

*May we all work together, like the early Church, in unity, to resolve differences in our mutual efforts to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ:
"For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." (Acts 15:28)*

7. Unity the Key to Another Pentecost (Enabled by Humility)

God's perfect love creates an atmosphere of humility among the brotherhood. Here the beautiful spirit of, "*one mind and one accord*", unity can operate to create the explosion of revival and evangelism experienced in the book of Acts.

Unity is defined as: "a condition of harmony or unification; the quality or state of being made one; a balanced pleasing or suitable arrangement of multiple parts. The opposite of unity is: confusion, disorganization, tension, disconnectedness, disjointedness, isolation, incompatibility."

J. Lyth, D.D states: "A living unity requires: the combination of many members, the harmonious arrangement of parts, the inspiration of one Spirit, and cooperation for one common end."

Jesus' last prayer with His disciples before He went to the cross was for them to be one in unity and harmony:

John 17:11, 20-23

*Father, keep in Your Name those whom You have given Me, that they may be **one** as We are **one**. Neither for these alone do I pray, but also for all those who will ever come to believe in Me through their word and teaching, **that they all may be one**, just as You, Father, are in Me and I in you . . . that they may be **one**, even as We are **one**: I in them and You in Me, in order that they may become **one** and **perfectly united**. AMP*

There is power in the natural world in unity and togetherness. For example one horse can pull six tons, while two horses can pull thirty-six tons. In the business world where there is unity (synergy) in a team, much more can be accomplished than the individuals working alone.

Moses declared in Deuteronomy that with God's help against the enemy: "*One will chase a thousand and two [working together in unity] will put ten thousand to flight.*" In the Kingdom of God there is unlimited power in unity, because it invites and allows the miraculous power of God to work with us.

Unity is simply having agreement, harmony and oneness in purpose and action. It is the glue in the body of Christ that allows us to be one. Even with all of our differences (perspectives, experiences, stages of spiritual growth, talents, ages, etc.) we can celebrate our great King, Jesus Christ, and work together in harmony for the greater cause. King David speaks of the beauty of unity in *Psalms 133:1* "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.*"

Jesus Christ declares that He will meet with His children when they come together in unity and harmony. Unified agreement in the body of Christ brings His very presence into our midst with answers to our prayers and fulfillment of our needs:

Matt. 18:19-20

*19 Again I tell you, if **two of you on earth agree (harmonize together)** about whatever [anything and everything] they may ask, it will come to pass and be done for them by My Father in heaven.*

*20 For wherever **two or three are gathered** (drawn together as My followers) in My name, there I am in the midst of them.*
AMP

- **If unity brings the favor and power of God to His people, disunity brings God's disfavor and hinders His power working among us.**

Understanding that the world hates and detests the followers of Jesus Christ should unify us as one body: *"If you belonged to the world, the world would treat you with affection and would love you as its own. But because you are not of the world [no longer one with it], but I have chosen (selected) you out of the world, the **world hates (detests) you**" (John 15:19).*
AMP

Unity in the body of Christ is not uniformity. We all have a unique fingerprint, voice print, retina print, DNA, and different personalities and talents. The church is composed of many individuals from a diversity of backgrounds, with different ideas and ways of doing things.

This diversity can cause an atmosphere unfavorable and Sometimes hostile to the spirit of unity in the church. The

world culture establishes a mindset of maintaining the individual independence. It emphasizes the initiative, action, interests and conduct of the individual.

In the Kingdom of God, we as diverse members of one body, must contend for unity working together toward one common goal -- reaching a lost world. And as believers, we must fight and oppose the world's culture of individualistic principles and values.

The Spirit of Unity at the Birth of the Church

Unity (one mind and one accord) was the significant element present at the birth of the Church, where in one day explosive results of the supernatural shook a city and ignited a revival that affected a nation and reached around the world.

Acts 1:14

*These all continued with **one accord** in prayer and supplication.*

Acts 2:1-2, 4

*1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with **one accord** [like-minded, agreement, harmonious] in one place.*

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

- **Before there was a rushing mighty wind of God's Spirit, there was a "one mind and one accord" spirit of unity.**

**The Book of Acts Church Continued in the
Spirit of Unity and Harmony**

Acts 2:46

*And day after day they regularly assembled in the temple with **united purpose**, and in their homes they broke bread [including the Lord's Supper]. AMP*

Acts 4:32

*All the believers **were united in heart and mind**. NLT*

Acts 5:12

*And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with **one accord** in Solomon's porch).*

Supernatural Results From the “One Mind and One Accord” Unity in the Book of Acts Church

Acts 2:41

The same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Acts 2:47

And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Acts 4:4

Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

Acts 5:14

And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.

PERFECT LOVE -- THE HIGHEST LAW AND STRONGEST FORCE

Acts 6:7

And the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Acts 9:34-35

34 And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

Acts 19:10

And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

The first century Church still challenges us today. With the fire and the purity of its unity came an energy unequalled in almost 20 centuries. We see in the book of Acts a “*one mind and one accord*” unity producing revival and evangelism with miracles, signs and the rapid spread of the gospel. The supernatural results of unity was that: “*All of Asia heard the word in the space of two years.*”

The Word of God prophesied, “*That the glory of the latter house will be greater than of the former*”, greater than the first Church in Acts. We will experience this only as we operate in **unity** driven by genuine **humility** and genuine **love** -- God’s **perfect love**.

- **To be a book of Acts Church, there must be unity in essentials, tolerance in non-essentials, and love in all things.**

- **To enjoy unity, one must contribute to it. Every believer should be in unity with the Holy Spirit, to those in leadership and with members of the body of Christ.**

Just as the saints in a congregation are taught to be accountable and in unity with their pastor; pastors should be accountable and in unity with the leaders of their district and nation. If pastors and leaders work together in unity, this will help ensure unity in their own congregations.

**Apostle Paul Admonishes the Saints to
Continue in Unity**

1 Cor. 1:10

*I urge and entreat you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you **be in perfect harmony and full agreement** in what you say, and that there be no dissensions or factions or divisions among you, but that you be **perfectly united** in your common understanding and in your opinions and judgments. AMP*

Phil. 2:2

*That ye be **likeminded**, having the **same love**, being of **one accord**, of **one mind**.*

Col. 3:12-15

*12 Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with **tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience**.*

13 Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. TLB

15 And let the peace (soul harmony which comes) from Christ rule (act as umpire continually) in your hearts [deciding and settling with finality all questions that arise in your minds, in that peaceful state] to which as [members of Christ's] one body you were also called [to live]. And be thankful (appreciative), [giving praise to God always]. AMP

Eph. 4:1-3

1 I therefore beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

2 Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.

3 Try always to be led along together by the Holy Spirit and so be at peace with one another.

Additional Scriptures: Rom. 14:19, Rom. 15:6, Eph. 4:4-6, Phil. 1:27.

Unifying Traits and Attitudes

In the above Scriptures Apostle Paul describes a number of critical basic traits to establish unity among members in the body of Christ. Three of these key traits are: humility, gentleness or meekness and patience.

The **first** and foremost cornerstone is **humility** (preferring your brother). The other traits (patience, gentleness, harmony, etc.) flow from an humble spirit. When we are truly humble, these other qualities will automatically be a part of our lives. The root of conflict and disunity and the opposite of humility, is pride (preferring our way above our brother's).

- **Humility allows us to manage differences of opinion with caution since we don't presume to have the right answer to everything or even understand another person's perspective or thought process that has led to a different conclusion.**¹

A **second** unifying attitude is **gentleness** or **meekness**, which complements humility as a companion disposition.

A **third** unifying attitude named by Paul is **patience**. Patience is not simply the ability to wait. Patience is literally "longsuffering." Paul connects patience with the phrase "***making allowance for each other's faults because of your love***" (Eph. 4:2). Patience indicates a willingness to tolerate and overlook another's faults and idiosyncrasies. It is focusing on the common ground that we share compared to the small percentage of which we disagree.

-- From "Maintaining the Unity of the Church"

When we hear the word "***meekness***," we often think of someone who is weak. We think of someone who is a 90 pound weakling. Weakness has nothing at all to do with Biblical "***meekness***."

This word carries the idea of "***gentleness or mildness***." It does not speak of weakness, but of power under control of a master. It brings to mind a wild horse that has been broken. The horse, though it has been broken, still retains all the power and wildness that it ever had. Now, that power is brought under control of its master. If you have seen the lions and tigers at the circus, you have seen this kind of "***meekness***" in action. Those big cats have the ability to easily destroy the lion tamer, but

they don't. They have yielded control of that power to the lion tamer.²

The strongest person in the world is not one who can put others in their place. The strongest person in the world is the one who can control their reactions to all the actions of others and events of life: *"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city"* (Prov. 16:32).

Common Ties That Unify Us

Members of the body of Jesus Christ, have so many things in common to bind us together in unity:

- We all have the same Father.
- We believe in one Lord, one faith and one baptism.
- We fight a common battle against a common enemy.
- We belong to one family: the body of Christ, the brotherhood.
- We share a common partnership encouraging and lifting each other up.
- We share a common mission -- to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to the whole world.
- We all are preparing to spend eternity in the same place.

These things unify us and matter the most. They unite us as one body and cause us to lay aside our differences. When we focus on these, we can accomplish so much more for the Kingdom of God.

When we lose sight of these common ties, we become detached from the body and dis-unified. We must be

constantly aware of satan's trap of disunity and refuse to let personality differences, personal preferences, differences in style, and petty details divide and disunite us. We must prevent satan from sowing discord and refrain from fighting each other instead of fighting him.

The key to unity begins with how we view ourselves within the body compared to how we view others. Apostle Paul addresses this in *Philippians 2:3* "*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.*" Disunity is created when someone acts selfishly and considers themselves better than others.

-- From "Church Unity"

Paul tells us that we are to consider others' needs before our own. In all modesty, humility and lowliness of mind, we are to "*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love*" (*Eph. 4:2*). A church filled with such people cannot help but have peace, unity and harmony. The truly humble person sees his own faults in light of the perfections of Christ; he does not seek to see the faults of others. But he does not seek to notice the errors, defects, and follies of others.

How can we demean or criticize those covered with the precious blood of Christ? Were we not slaves to sin when He called us, hopelessly lost, dead in our own transgressions and sins (*Eph. 2:1*)?

But we are now slaves of Christ, slaves to righteousness, and as slaves of the Master, the task before us is not to quarrel and demand our needs be met but to reflect His grace and love to those who are also His by His mercy. A church full of such people enjoying their "common

salvation” will be a true, biblical church unified in, and earnestly contending for, the “*faith once delivered to the saints*” (*Jude 1:3*).³

Human Body Compared to Unity in the Body of Christ

The human body is the most amazing of all of God's creation. It is marvelously complex, yet it is unified with unparalleled harmony and interrelatedness. It is one unit and cannot be subdivided into several bodies. If the body is divided, the part that is cut off ceases to function and dies. The rest of the body loses some functions and effectiveness. The complete human body is immeasurably more than the sum of its parts, likewise the body of Christ.

Paul uses an extensive comparison between the human body and the body of Christ to describe how God wants His Church to operate. This comparison emphasizes the horizontal connection and unity among the many different members as well as the dramatic diversity of many members working with complete unity in one body.

1 Cor. 12:12-18, 20, 25-27

12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

*13 For by one [Holy] Spirit we were all, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, baptized [and by baptism united together] into **one body**, and all made to drink of **one [Holy] Spirit**.*

14 For the body does not consist of one limb or organ but of many.

15 If the foot should say, Because I am not the hand, I do not belong to the body, would it be therefore not [a part] of the body?

16 If the ear should say, Because I am not the eye, I do not belong to the body, would it be therefore not [a part] of the body?

17 If the whole body were an eye, where [would be the sense of] hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where [would be the sense of] smell?

*18 But as it is, **God has placed and arranged the limbs and organs in the body**, each [particular one] of them, just as He wished and saw fit and with the best adaptation.*

20 And now there are [certainly] many limbs and organs, but a single body.

25 So that there should be no division or discord or lack of adaptation [of the parts of the body to each other], but the members all alike should have a mutual interest and care for one another.

26 And if one member suffers, all the parts [share] the suffering; if one member is honored, all the members [share in] the enjoyment of it.

27 Now you [collectively] are Christ's body and [individually] you are members of it, each part severally and distinct [each with his own place and function]. AMP

Apostle Paul, in his letters to the Ephesians and Colossians, emphasizes the **vertical connection** and unity of the various members of the body to the Head of the body, Jesus Christ.

Eph. 4:15-16

*15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is **the head, even Christ**:*

16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Col. 1:18

***He is the Head of the body** made up of his people -- that is, his Church which he began; and he is the Leader of all those who arise from the dead, so that he is first in everything. TLB*

Col. 2:19

*Christ puts us together in one piece, whose very breath and blood flow through us. **He is the Head and we are the body.** We can grow up healthy in God only as he nourishes us. MSG*

Paul developed the analogy of the body to teach us about our relationship with one another. We are dependent on each other. It is through cooperation that we make our contribution and, in turn, are helped and aided to grow. Individualism in today's culture, with its emphasis on who is the "best" and "greatest", is unhealthy and destructive to the body of Christ.

-- From Teacher's Commentary

Paul's fullest treatment of the theme relational unity (1 Cor. 12:12-27) consists of an extended comparison between the human body and the Church in order to emphasize horizontal union among the members of Christ's body and to demonstrate dramatically both diversity within unity (12:14-19) and unity out of diversity (12:20-27).

For Paul, the urgent need for humility, interdependence, and love within the Christian community is grounded in this dynamic horizontal unity between members of the body of Christ, a union that overcomes even the most imposing racial and social barriers (1 Cor. 12:13; cf. Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:16). Horizontal, social relations between members are grounded in the vertical union each member enjoys with Christ (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 12:13).

The head is not merely one body part among many, but Christ's role as Head over the Church entails authority and supremacy (Eph. 1:22; 5:24; Col. 1:18). Moreover, this head-body relationship between Christ and the Church stands at the center of God's plan for the entire cosmos over which Christ has been established as sovereign (Eph. 1:20-23).⁴

-- From The Biblical Illustrator

The chemist mixes his various elements together in the battery, and when they are brought together, and the conditions are fulfilled, electricity is there. He does not summon electricity from some remote distance; but already dormant in these elements was the electric

power, and when they are combined, instantly the electric power springs into existence. So Christ says: "In each one of you Christians there is a dormant power. I am in you, but there is more of Me in all of you together than there is in any one of you separate and individually; and when you have combined around My banner and My name to do My will, there springs into existence, not merely the strength that comes from union, but the Diviner help that comes from this, that I am in the midst of that body of believers, the spirit that inspires the body." **It becomes at once more than human -- it becomes Divine -- the body of Christ.**⁵

When One Member Suffers All Suffer

1 Cor. 12:26

And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

When a thorn punctures the foot, other members of the body respond in feeling. The back bends, the hands, stomach, and thighs are drawn together. The head drops, eyes squint, the brow is furrowed with sympathy for the wounded member. Hands of comfort approach the wounded part and proceed to extract the painful object and soothe the wound.

Plato states: "When one's finger is hurt such is the fellow-feeling which spreads along the body to the soul until it reaches the ruling principle, that, the whole condoling with the part afflicted, the man says not 'my finger is in pain,' but I have a pain in my finger."

-- From The Pulpit Commentary

What if the hands should wish to injure the feet, or the eyes the hands? As all the members agree together because it is the interest of the whole that each should be kept safe, so men spare their fellow men because we are born for heaven, and society cannot be saved except by the love and protection of its elements. We have been born for mutual help, like the feet, like the hands, like the eyes. To act in opposition to another is therefore contrary to God's nature.⁶

- **An important mark of human maturity and self-awareness is a growing respect and care for one's own body. There is a parallel in our spiritual life: as we mature in Jesus Christ, we will gain a deeper understanding of the need for care and protection for every member in the body of Christ.**
- **Like a natural healthy body where all actions within the members are unified and directed by the head, so should it be in the body of Christ. Any unkindness toward a member of the body of Christ indicates a serious spiritual disorder because that action is not directed by the Head of the body, Jesus Christ.**

Schism (Division and Disunity) in the Body of Christ

1 Cor. 12:25

That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

A schism is defined as: “a division among the members of a group that occurs because of a disagreement, a lack or

agreement or harmony in a group, disunity, strife, variance.”

In the body of Christ it is caused by a breach of friendship through unkind words or treatment caused by a lack of humility. It is simply a lack of love for a brother -- which is in disobedience to the Word of God: *“In the true spirit of humility (lowliness of mind) let each regard the others as better than and superior to himself [thinking more highly of one another than you do of yourselves]”* (Phil. 2:3). AMP

-- From The Biblical Illustrator

A schism may be destructive: A screw in the crank of an engine of an express train at full speed thus addressed itself to the surrounding machinery: “I’m very small, but exceedingly important. Without me the whole fabric would come to grief. Upon me depends the successful working of the whole engine. Now just you observe how important I am!” and then without more ado the screw leapt from its socket, involving the whole train in hopeless wreckage.⁵

As believers we must guard against every proud look, word, or action. We must cultivate impartiality in our treatment of our fellow-members, and the ministers of the gospel. We must submit to one another and pray for one another. We must very carefully and thoughtfully choose our words. The cause of many, if not most, schisms has been an unguarded trifling word.

Biblical Example for Handling Conflict in the Church

In the early Church many Jews embraced the faith of Christ, yet continued very zealously for the Law. They contended that the Gentile Christians must be circumcised and keep the ceremonial Law of Moses. Church leaders called a council meeting at Jerusalem to discuss this very delicate issue. This was a very volatile subject with “. . . *much disputing*” (*Acts 15:7*). However a wonderful spirit of unity accompanied their conclusions:

Acts 15:28, 30-31

28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;

30 So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle:

31 Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.

- **May we all work together, like the early Church in the spirit of love and unity, to resolve any differences in our common efforts to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. And may we always seek for what seems good to the Holy Ghost and our brethren, and not just our own personal preference.**

James 3:15-18

15 For jealousy and selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, inspired by the devil.

*16 For wherever there is jealousy or selfish ambition, **there will be disorder** and every other kind of evil.*

*17 But the wisdom from above is first of all pure (undefiled); then it is **peace-loving**, courteous (considerate, gentle). [It is willing to] yield to reason, full of compassion and good fruits; it is wholehearted and straightforward, impartial and unfeigned (free from doubts, wavering, and insincerity).*

*18 And the harvest of righteousness (of conformity to God's will in thought and deed) is sown in peace by those who **work for and make peace** [in themselves and in others, that peace which means **concord, agreement, and harmony between individuals**, with undisturbedness, in a peaceful mind free from fears and agitating passions].*

-- From "Differences Are Golden Opportunities for Love"

Inside the church we have differences that call for deep and real and relentless love toward one another. Schaeffer, in the article on "The Mark of a Christian," said that this is our golden moment.

There are the differences among us in what we find helpful in worship. What kind of music? What kind of instruments? What kind of singing? What kind of atmosphere? These differences are threatening the unity and love of churches all over the world. Here is a golden opportunity to learn love and show love in the midst of difference. The key question is not just what should worship look like, but what should love look like among Christians who don't agree on what worship should look like.⁷

Unity the Key to Conquering a New Natural Frontier

In 1960, President J. F. Kennedy issued the challenging task for the U.S. to put a man on the moon. There were numerous difficult obstacles to overcome, including technical problems to solve, because it had never been done before.

Amazingly, the project team caught the vision of putting a rocket into space and landing a man on the moon. An incredible amount of synergy (referred to as unity in the church) developed within the team because they were all focused on one goal -- putting a man on the moon.

Working late one night, an engineer observed: "Have you noticed the change in our whole team working on this project? Something has happened. Look how we are working together to solve technically challenging problems. Our team has accomplished almost impossible things and certainly something no one individual could do working alone. What do you think has caused this?" Another team member, pointing to the sky remarked, "See that moon up there? Men have wondered about it for years, but we are getting ready to go there. Our team, working together in harmony toward that one goal, is what has changed us. We believe we can go where no one has been before. We believe we can conquer a new frontier in space."

Unity the Key to Conquering a New Spiritual Frontier

Considering the dedication of people working on the frontiers of technology and other temporal disciplines; what would happen if we would match their intensity and unity working in

the Father's business with its eternal values! At stake, is deliverance for eternal souls entrapped in prisons of sin, abuse and despair.

Jesus addressed this issue in His parable of the unjust steward: *"And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: **for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light**" (Luke 16:8).*

This was a sorrowful reflection by Jesus. The men and women of this world whose ends and aims are bounded by the horizon of this world live only for this life. They are more diligent and skillful in their working for the perishable things of this world than are the children of light in their noble toiling after the things of the life to come -- the eternal.

The task of the endtime harvest has been assigned. The vision of conquering a new frontier in the supernatural has been given. The team, the Apostolic Church, has been assembled. The supernatural resources are available. It can no longer be business as usual. The times demand that our service in the Father's business exceeds the intensity and unity of our efforts of yesteryear.

Snowflakes are pretty fragile but if enough of them stick together they can stop traffic. That is true with us as members of one body. By ourselves we cannot do a lot. However, together working in **harmony**, we can make a Kingdom impact that brings miraculous healing and salvation to a lost and hurting generation that desperately needs God.

Unity is Essential for Victory on the Battlefield

The kingdom of satan is unifying its forces and setting its battle in array against the mission of the Church and every born-again believer. This is the same battle that has been waged through the centuries between right and wrong. However, the final battle between the forces of good and evil, will be even more violent because it is satan's final stand to destroy the purpose of God for the great endtime harvest of lost souls.

Rev. 12:12

Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

1 Peter 5:8

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.

This evil aggressive enemy is abusing, killing, and committing unspeakable atrocities against innocent victims.

The Commitment of the Christian Soldier: We as Christian soldiers are called by our great Commander in Chief, Jesus Christ, to: engage, defeat and bind the enemy, to bring deliverance to those bound in prisons of sin, sickness and abuse.

But we are also called to rally under one banner of truth and fight together in unity against the evil empire of satan. Our efforts to survive and successfully defeat the enemy are directly related to how we unselfishly work together with unity in the brotherhood for the greater cause.

“Dear God may we, like Joshua fighting a great battle as the sun is setting and victory is slipping away, ask You for the impossible. Give us miraculous light in the evening time and divine help to secure a total victory in Your harvest field and battlefield. And may we as brothers in Christ embrace one another in **love**, **humility** and **unity** in answering the challenge and call of a new frontier.”

- **May our loyalty and commitment to the brotherhood (our fellow soldiers), in our noble battle for the things of the eternal, exceed that of soldiers whose mission and goals are bounded by the horizon of the temporal.**

The commitment of the Marine soldier: A Marine states: “In a combat zone or on a critical mission we lose awareness of self as we become dependent on our unified team. The accomplishment of our mission and often our survival depends on teamwork.”

“*Semper Fidelis* distinguishes the Marine Corps bond from any other. It goes beyond teamwork -- it is a **brotherhood** that can always be counted on. Latin for ‘always faithful’, *Semper Fidelis* became the Marine Corps motto in 1883. It guides Marines to remain faithful to the mission at hand, to each other, to the Corps and to country, no matter what. Becoming a Marine is a transformation that cannot be undone, and *Semper Fidelis* is a permanent reminder of that. Honor, courage and commitment, the core values of the Marines, define how every Marine in the Corps thinks, acts and fights.”⁸

- **There is an essential principle vital and mandatory for a revival that will reach our lost world in a significant way -- and that is “*one mind and one accord*” unity among the brotherhood.**
- **There is an essential requirement vital and mandatory for unity to operate in the Church -- and that is genuine humility.**
- **There is an essential requirement vital and mandatory for genuine humility -- and that is “God’s perfect love” flowing in the brotherhood.**

*If we do a good deed to someone,
If we say a kind word to someone,
If we display a Christ-like attitude to someone,
God considers it as having been done to Him.*

** * * * **

*If we do an unkind deed to someone,
If we say an unkind word to someone,
If we are critical or judgmental of someone,
If we display a bad attitude to someone,
God considers it as having been done to Him.*

8. We Are Connected to Our Brother Through Our Father

We are connected to our brother through the Father. If we want to do something good for the Father, we must do it for our brother and it will be received by the Father as having been done to Him.

8.1 Anything (Good or Evil) Done to a Brother, the Father Considers It as Done to Him

The setting is the judgment when Christ divides the righteous (on His right) from the unrighteous (on His left). The final test is simply whether or not they had ministered to people who were in need.

Refer to Chart G-23a, “Final Test at the Judgment”, in Appendix 1.

The key message spoken by Jesus at the judgment was:

“When you did something good to someone in need, you were doing it to Me!”

“When you neglected to do something for someone in need, you were neglecting Me!”

Doing Good to a Brother

Matt. 18:5

*And whoever **receives and accepts and welcomes one little child** like this for My sake and in My name **receives and accepts and welcomes Me.** AMP*

Matt. 25:34-36, 40

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

*40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, **Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.***

Matt. 10:40-42

*40 **Anyone who receives you receives me,** and anyone who receives me receives the Father who sent me.*

41 If you receive a prophet as one who speaks for God, you will be given the same reward as a prophet. And if you receive righteous people because of their righteousness, you will be given a reward like theirs.

*42 And if you **give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded.** NLT*

Luke 14:13-14

*13 But when thou makest a feast, **call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:***

14 And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense

thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

Prov. 19:17

He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.

Additional Scriptures: Heb. 6:10-11, Phil. 4:18-19, Isa. 58:7-8.

Neglecting to Do Good or Doing Evil to a Brother

Matt. 25:41-43, 45-46

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in:

43 Naked, and ye clothed me not: I was sick, and ye visited me not: I was in prison, and ye visited me not.

*45 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, **Inasmuch as ye have not done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me.***

46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

1 Cor. 8:12

*12 It is a **sin against Christ** to sin against your brother. TLB*

*12 When you hurt your friend, **you hurt Christ.** MSG*

Additional Scriptures: Acts 9:4-5, Prov. 14:31, Prov. 17:5, Prov. 28:27.

Conclusion

God loves all of His children equally and demands that we do the same. He is very protective of His children and is pleased when we treat them right. He is very displeased when we treat them wrong.

If we do a good deed to someone, if we say a kind word to someone, if we display a Christ-like attitude to someone, God considers it as having been done to Him. If we do an unkind deed to someone; if we say an unkind word to someone; if we are critical or judgmental of someone; if we display a bad attitude to someone; God considers it as having been done to Him.

- **God's Word declares: "Anything we do (good or evil) to a brother, our heavenly Father considers it as having been done to Him. And He may repay the deed in like kind."**

8.2 If Our Relationship With Our Brother is Not Right -- Our Relationship With the Father is Not Right

The Scriptures presented above prove that our relationship with our heavenly Father is very connected to our relationship with our brother. So strongly does God feel about our relationship with others, He attaches it to our relationship with Him.

- **An unreconciled relationship with a brother creates an unreconciled relationship with the Father.**

Repeatedly in God's Word, the Scriptures declare: **"Our love and relationship with God is manifested and measured by our love and relationship with our brother."**

One of the best ways for those around us to know that our relationship with God is right is that our relationship with our brother is right. It is a good self-exam for us to see if we are in right standing with God.

God is the Father of everyone on earth. To those born of the Spirit, He is also their spiritual Father: *“Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother?” (Mal. 2:10).*

Since God is the Father of everyone, then we are all brothers and sisters. And He loves His unsaved children as much as He loves those who are saved. We earthly fathers do also. We love our children because they are a part of our flesh and blood, not because they are always doing everything right. That is the unconditional love of a father.

I don't allow my children to be judgmental or critical of each other. If they have a problem in getting along, they have a problem with me. If the relationship between my children is not right, their relationship with me is adversely affected. I tell the one whose been wronged to let me know and I will deal with it, because I can do it with love, fairness, experience and wisdom.

- **Just as the head of a natural family insists on love, peace and unity in the family, our heavenly Father, the Head of the family of God, demands the same: *I demand that you love each other as much as I love you (John 15:12).***
TLB

PERFECT LOVE -- THE HIGHEST LAW AND STRONGEST FORCE

Relationships in the household of faith are doubly important because we are double brothers and sisters (natural and spiritual): *“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, **especially unto them who are of the household of faith**” (Gal. 6:10).*

The following are some practical examples to consider when dealing with relationship problems.

Scenario 1: Someone does us wrong and after some time they ask us to forgive them.

Right Response:

We forgive them and we have spoken only to our heavenly Father regarding our brother's wrong.

Wrong Response:

We have told other people negative things about our brother. Even if we go to these people and tell them that we have been reconciled with our brother (which is seldom done), we may have adversely affected others with negative feelings that may never be made right. Sometimes the bitterness from someone, after their death, live on in the hearts of those uninvolved in the original conflict.

Scenario 2: We do something wrong to someone. After some time we realize what we have done and we ask them to forgive us.

Right Response:

They don't forgive us, and we talk only to our heavenly Father and continue to pursue reconciliation.

Wrong Response:

They don't forgive us, and we talk to others in a critical or judgmental way -- spreading ill feelings about this person.

Scenario 3: Someone does us wrong and doesn't ask our forgiveness. We are seemingly 99% right; they are 99% wrong.

Right Response:

(New Testament -- be reconciled with your brother): Go to the one who has wronged us (as Jesus commanded in Matthew 5:24) with humility and love, asking him to forgive us for the misunderstanding or what we have done to contribute to the problem. Display a sincere attitude of love, humility and our desire for reconciliation. Be careful that what we say displays sincere humility that it cannot be taken as a self-righteous statement ("I am right, you are wrong, I forgive you") by making no accusations or mention of their wrongdoing.

Wrong Response:

(Old Testament -- an eye for an eye): We feel justified in defending ourselves by telling others -- making critical and judgmental statements or terminating any contact with the person. There is nothing wrong with telling a close friend our hurts and asking them to pray for us and the other person (but we must be careful of our motive).

The real issue is reconciliation with our brother, our neighbor or our enemy -- as commanded by the Father. Reconciliation is more important than who is right and who is wrong.

There will always be those whom treat us wrongly, that is a part of life. But there is nothing heavier to carry than a grudge or a wounded spirit. It will cause us to lose sleep and take away our peace, while the one who has done the wrong is probably sleeping peacefully.

We must use the power that is resident in us as born-again believers -- the power of God's perfect love to release the things that are offending and hurting us. We must let go, forgive, and pursue reconciliation with a brother so that our

relationship with our Father can be right. Doing this will lead us to a new place in our Christian walk, because we will have the favor of the Father.

Rev. T. F. Tenney, conference speaker, former pastor and district superintendent, stated: “One of the things that I still struggle with, after all the years in the ministry, is being willing to take the blame, when I am in the right, to bring about reconciliation. This is what Jesus did and we should follow His example.”

We don’t have to admit to wrongdoing if we have not done anything wrong. But we can display an humble, apologetic spirit that there has been a misunderstanding. When we are truly honest, we may see our actions that contributed to the misunderstanding. We can display a spirit of God’s love, that lets the other person know we genuinely want any differences to be reconciled.

A Defensive Sword

Many Christians have discarded their offensive sword but have retained their defensive one.

- **A defensive sword is just as sharp and deadly and will wound just as quickly.**

If we are doing what is right we do not have to defend ourselves. We have often justified ourselves in using a defensive sword when we were right. Multiple times in Holy Writ God reminds us that “*Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord.*” This was discussed at length in Chapter 2.5.

We need to dispose of our defensive sword and get a supply of healing ointment (divine love), and apply it to the wounds of those around us.

- **We stop the cycle of violence when we return good for evil as taught and exemplified by Jesus.**

Go to your brother with a soothing, healing balm, not a defensive sword. How will the world know we are different if we react the same way as they do? This ministry of reconciliation is the most rewarding work. It gives us the peace and joy of the Father, because a part of the family has been reconciled -- the Father and two or more brothers.

- **If we want peace, we must carry out only peaceful actions.**

Too much time is spent talking and thinking about who is right and who is wrong. We should spend that energy on efforts of reconciliation. We are all in need of forgiveness, and reconciliation is what matters most. Let's dispose of our defensive sword, replace it with a vessel of forgiving, healing balm (perfect love) to anoint everyone with a wound.

In battle there are casualties and wounded on both sides regardless of who is right or wrong. Don't choose a side even if it appears to be the right one. The only side that pleases the Father is the **humble side**.

If we attempt to fight our own battles, even if it is a defensive battle, we will further damage the relationship and will fight the battle alone. God and our guardian angel will abandon us in our efforts.

The angels can only work for us when our life is aligned with His Word: “*Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, **hearkening to the voice of his word***” (Psalms 103:20). If we attempt to fight our own battles, our angels’ hands will be tied and we will fight the battles alone.

Weakness Vs. Meekness

Some consider what is described above as a sign of weakness, particularly in the business world and other environments outside the church.

Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount: “*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth*” (Matt. 5:5).

Weakness is doing something very easy or avoiding something very difficult. To fight our own battle, to defend ourselves comes naturally. To take the humble side, to ask forgiveness of someone with whom we have a strained relationship is difficult -- that is against our nature. That is meekness not weakness because it takes a strong Christian to pursue selflessness -- dying to the flesh.

Moses was known as the meekest man in all the earth. But God’s powerful hand defended him during a rebellion in Israel. God caused the earth to open up and swallow those who came against him.

The Value of a Peacemaker

Another role we can play when others violate these principles:

- We can be a peacemaker.
- We can promote love, peace and mercy.
- We can minister reconciliation concepts to others.

Matt. 5:9

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

2 Cor. 13:11

Be joyful. Grow to maturity. Encourage each other. Live in harmony and peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you. NLT

Peacemakers really benefit a family and usually are not a part of the conflict. A peacemaker in a natural family brings joy to the father. A peacemaker in the family of God brings the favor of the Father and his reward will be blessings in this life and eternal life in the world to come.

- **We only have so much physical, mental and emotional energy to spend in a lifetime. And may we spend it on peaceful, loving words and actions.**

Our relationship with our brother is connected to our relationship with our heavenly Father and our eternal destiny. Let's not jeopardize our eternal life or that of our brother by failing to humbly pursue the path of love, forgiveness and reconciliation.

How can we proclaim God's perfect love as the solution to the sinner's estrangement from the Father, if we can't extend it to our brother in the family of God?

** * * * **

The central theme and emphasis of Christianity revolves around the forgiveness and restoration of a broken relationship between God and man. The requirement to receive and retain this unmerited and gracious gift from our heavenly father is to pursue reconciliation and restoration in our broken relationship with our brother.

** * * * **

When we follow Christ's example of loving reactions in response to unfair judgment and mistreatment, we stop the cycle of violence, and start the cycle of forgiveness and reconciliation -- bringing the favor of our heavenly Father.

9. Biblical Forgiveness Involves Reconciliation of the Relationship

(Getting Right With God and Our Brother)

First Mention of Forgiveness in the Bible

The first mention of forgiveness is in Genesis. When Joseph reveals himself to his brothers, the word, “***forgive***” first walks on the stage of Scripture: “*Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him*” (Gen. 50:17).

In this setting, we observe Joseph (the type of Jesus in the Old Testament) forgiving his brothers who tried to kill him and caused him immense suffering in slavery and prison for many years. Yet he forgave and lovingly reconciled with them when he had the power of their life and death in his hands. Refer to Chapter 10, “Love Perfected by the Refiner’s Fire and the Cross”, for a summary of Joseph’s suffering and forgiveness.

Divine providence dictated that this first mention of forgiveness would be the most challenging. This provides the example for us to follow with forgiveness of a brother whether it is within our natural family or the family of God.

The highest benchmark of human suffering recorded in Scripture (other than Jesus Christ) was that endured by Joseph. None of us will ever encounter greater trial, suffering or challenge for forgiveness and reconciliation. Chiseled into the stone of eternity is Joseph's story of extreme mistreatment, forgiveness and reconciliation -- an excellent example for us to follow.

"The Law of First Mention" simply means the very first time any important word is mentioned in the Bible (in this case, Genesis, the first book of the Bible). Scripture gives that word its most complete and accurate meaning. This not only serves as a key in understanding the word's biblical concept, but to also provide a foundation for its fuller development in later parts of the Bible.

Forgiveness and reconciliation is a recurrent scriptural theme. It is depicted in Job, the Psalms, the prophets and the Sermon on the Mount. It is spoken in the Lord's Prayer. It is displayed at the cross. It was present at the resurrection and included in the apostles' writings. We, too, are called to continue to practice and proclaim the message of forgiveness and reconciliation.

The Vital Importance of the Sermon on the Mount

The Sermon on the Mount, recorded in Matthew Chapters 5 - 7, is the most notable and largest single body of Jesus' teaching recorded in the New Testament (107 consecutive red-letter verses). Undeniably Jesus' most important sermon, it is His magnum opus and grand treatise on how humans should live. May we study it often and measure our actions and words against these beautiful precepts enfolded in God's **perfect love**.

The significance of the Sermon on the Mount cannot be overemphasized. Jesus accentuates the great importance of these teachings by ending His sermon with the story of a house built on the rock and the other constructed on the sand.

Those who hear Jesus' teachings and live according to His mandate of love are building upon a foundation that will endure the coming storms. Conversely, those who live according to the old way of an "eye-for-an-eye and unforgiveness" are doomed for destruction.

Matt. 7:24-27

*24 Therefore **whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them**, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:*

25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

*26 And **every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not**, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:*

27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

The Sermon on the Mount raised the bar for righteousness to a new level. The Old Testament represented the letter of the Law. With the coming of Jesus in the New Testament He proclaimed the Spirit of the Law. Jesus said, “You have heard it said . . .” (letter of the Law), “But I say . . .” (spirit of the Law). Jesus declared: “*I am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it.*” He redefined the old Law through the eyes of His perfect love.

The very first (possibly the most important) of several “*Ye have heard it said -- but I say*”, statements by Jesus address relationship with our brother and then the **right response to an offense by our brother**.

**Reconciliation With Our Brother is Commanded
Before Worship is Accepted by Our Heavenly Father**

Matt. 5:20-24

20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool shall be in danger of hell fire.

23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

*24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be **reconciled** to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

23 This is how I want you to conduct yourself in these matters. If you enter your place of worship and, about to make an offering, you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you,

*24 Abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to this friend and **make things right**. Then and only then, come back and work things out with God. MSG*

Jesus' teachings transcend the comfortable confines of the Law, an "eye for an eye" and command reconciliation with a brother.

Reconcile (Action Verb):

- a. to restore to friendship or harmony <reconcile the factions>**
- b. settle, resolve <reconcile differences>**
- c. cause to submit to or accept something unpleasant**
- d. to bring to a state free of conflicts, inconsistencies, isolation**

Related Words:

blend, combine, connect, correlate, unify, unite, align

Antonyms:

- disharmonize (disunity, uncooperative, division, falling-out, animosity)

- alienate (to be withdrawn, dissociate, disunite, divide, separate)
- estrange (to remove from associations, sever relationship, loss of affection or loyalty)¹

Getting Right With God Includes Getting Right With Your Brother

This Scripture teaches that when we approach God in an act of worship after being aware of an offense, we must initiate reconciliation with our brother. Otherwise, this act of disobedience will lead to a deeper rift in the relationship -- isolation, hard feelings, criticism, etc.

The choice to forgive and pursue reconciliation does not exonerate the offender, but it ends the cycle of violence and displays the divine nature of Jesus Christ.

The Father calls on the one kneeling in prayer or standing in a place of worship to take this first step in reconciliation. In this process, we approach our brother in sincerity, humility and love, asking for his forgiveness for our part in the misunderstanding or dispute. We are commanded to forgive and be reconciled with one another as God has forgiven and reconciled with us.

Col. 3:13

Be gentle and forbearing with one another and, if one has a difference (a grievance or complaint) against another, readily pardoning each other; even as the Lord has [freely] forgiven you, so must you also [forgive]. AMP

Eph. 4:30, 32

*30 And **do not grieve the Holy Spirit** of God [do not offend or vex or sadden Him], by Whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*

*32 And become useful and helpful and kind to one another, tenderhearted (compassionate, understanding, loving-hearted), **forgiving one another [readily and freely], as God in Christ forgave you.** AMP*

Biblical forgiveness cannot come from the natural carnal man, but the spirit-filled man. The Spirit of God is symbolized by a dove, representing peace and tranquility. When this Spirit directs our lives our reactions to hurt will be peaceful and forgiving. But when the Spirit of God is grieved, the Dove lifts and the flesh takes over. We then react like carnal man - being defensive, critical, unforgiving, or unwilling to initiate reconciliation.

Forgiveness begins when God's perfect love is re-extended to the offender in a spirit of true humility. By seeing our brother through the lens of the Father's perfect love, we realize his great value and worth and how much he is loved by our Father. We see beyond this disagreement. Because, as members of the body of Christ, we have a common mission and a common enemy. Therefore, we have much more common ground for agreement than the space that divides us.

Forgiveness is not finally complete until the severed relationship is restored (disharmony and estrangement of the relationship has ended). Then the Father's perfect love will flow between the two brothers once again.

Biblical reconciliation and an extension of God's perfect love

PERFECT LOVE -- THE HIGHEST LAW AND STRONGEST FORCE

to the offender is difficult -- it is costly. It requires humility and death to pride and a self-righteous attitude of: "It is my brother, not me, who is wrong". But, with Jesus' commandment for us to forgive and reconcile with an offending brother, He provides His perfect love to make it possible.

To "for-give" is a process of giving up -- giving up our right to be treated right (discussed in Chapter 2.7). In forgiving, we give up our demand for our brother to be perfect. We give and seek for forgiveness and reconciliation. In forgiving, we recognize and accept the genuine worth and value of this person, who is equally a child of our Father.

Just as time and circumstance changed Joseph's brothers, the person that hurt you in the past probably is not the same person today. As Christians we are all a work in progress; as God continues to change our lives.

Whether or not we chose to follow biblical principles of forgiveness and reconciliation will be driven by either our heart or our head:

Actions Driven by the Heart or the Head

Heart

When the biblical principles of love and reconciliation are deep beliefs in the **heart**, the head will follow providing the knowledge to take the correct actions.

Result

Perfect love will provide the humility and courage to perform the actions necessary for restoration of the relationship.

It will confront the offense, not with any accusation, but with love, acceptance and compassion. Willing to take blame for the misunderstanding.

Head

When the biblical principles of love and reconciliation are head knowledge, but not deep seated beliefs of the heart, the action to obey many of the related Scriptures will be ignored.

James 1:22

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

Results

The terrible sin of pride will cause us to justify our actions, place blame and remain isolated from further association with a brother.

Pride will convince us that actions of reconciliation will not be accepted. Jesus did not give any exceptions. He just commanded us “*to be reconciled*” (Matt. 5:23-24).

Reconciliation Driven by Volitional Love Vs. Emotional Love

“Genuine love is volitional rather than emotional. The person who truly loves does so because of a decision to love. This person has made a commitment to be loving whether or not the loving feeling is present. It is, so much the better; but if it isn’t, the commitment to love, the will to love, still stands and is still exercised.”²

Love can be emotional because there are natural affections that flow from our hearts. But far more desirable is God’s perfect love (agape) that is volitional. With agape love, we value the offender as having equal worth and being loved by God the same as ourselves.

In the initial step of reconciliation, when the emotional feeling of love and goodwill has not developed, we must exercise volitional love. This is motivated by a decision of the will to carry out Christ-like actions regardless of the other person’s actions or how we feel. However, through prayer for the offender and God’s help, our goal should be the complete restoration of the relationship with a feeling of love flowing between us once again.

- **This contradiction between feeling and choice, between emotion and volition is the difference between following the flesh or being led by the Spirit.**

Corrie ten Boom and her sister were held in a Nazi concentration camp during World War II. Corrie watched in shock and horror as her sister died of abuse and malnutrition while she miraculously survived the same atrocities. She and

her sister Betsie had been arrested for concealing Jews in their home during the Nazi occupation of Holland.

At the end of a meeting, where she spoke of her imprisonment, she was confronted by one of the guards that had beaten and abused her and her sister. This man had been a guard at Ravensbruck concentration camp where they were sent. Now he was in front of her, hand thrust out: "A fine message, Fraulein! How good it is to know that, as you say, all our sins are at the bottom of the sea!"

She remembered him and the leather whip swinging from his belt. She was face-to-face with one of her captors and she said that her blood seemed to freeze. "You mentioned Ravensbruck in your talk," he said; "I was a guard there. But since that time, I have become a Christian. I know that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from your lips as well Fraulein." He thrust out his hand and asked: "Will you forgive me?"

Corrie said she stood there, remembering her sins that had been forgiven again and again. But now she was struggling with forgiving a guard who had been responsible for her sister's death and her intense suffering. Betsie had suffered and died in large part by his hand of cruelty and her first thoughts were: "How these cruel actions could be erased simply by asking for forgiveness?"

It was just a few seconds that he stood there -- hand held out. But to her it seemed hours as she wrestled with the most difficult thing she had ever had to do.

She knew she had to do it because God's forgiveness has a prior condition -- that we forgive those who have hurt us: "*If*

you do not forgive men their trespasses,” Jesus says, “neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

Corrie said she stood there with a coldness clutching her heart. She knew the principles of God’s love and forgiveness:

- **Forgiveness is not an emotion.**
- **Forgiveness is an act of the will** that can function regardless of feelings or the temperature of the heart.

She prayed silently: “Help, I can lift my hand. I can do that much, please help me to forgive.” As she mechanically thrust her hand into the one stretched out to her an incredible thing took place. She said, the current started in her shoulder, raced down her arm, and sprang into their joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood her whole being, bringing tears to her eyes. “I forgive you, brother!” She cried, “With all my heart!”

For a long moment, they stood there grasping each other’s hands -- the former guard and the former prisoner. She said, at that moment, she had never felt God’s love so intensely, as God’s love and forgiveness to her and through her to someone that had caused her and her sister so much suffering and pain.

- **If Corrie could forgive someone this cruel and hurtful, surely we can graciously forgive our brother of a small infraction in comparison -- even if he doesn’t request it.**

Corrie ten Boom states: “Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the key of resentment and the handcuffs of hatred. It breaks the chains of bitterness and the shackles of selfishness.”

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in his book, “*The Soul and Barbed Wire*”, said he found forgiveness and learned how to forgive while suffering in prison. And when he was released, he was able to say, “Bless you, prison, for having been in my life.”

Pursuing Genuine Reconciliation

When our efforts for reconciliation include:

- True humility (free of accusations),
- Willingness to assume blame for the misunderstanding,
- Godly sorrow for the rift in the relationship,
- A genuine desire for restoration,

there is a very high probability that reconciliation will be achieved.

- **When we have made a sincere attempt to reconcile a relationship and been rebuffed, we should emulate Jesus who continues to pursue reconciliation with a sinner, even after being rejected.**

There is the unique case where someone has nothing against you but has an offensive personality. While we may have been offended they may be oblivious to their offensive words or actions. In this case, Jesus commands us to love them, pray for them, forgive and reach out to them with kindness: “*Pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.*”

Rom. 5:6, 8

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Jesus exemplified reconciliation when He took the blame for all of our sins and shed His blood to reconcile us to Himself. He who was without sin became sin that we could be forgiven and made the righteousness of God. Now He has called us to follow in His steps -- forgiving and exercising the ministry of reconciliation that He has given to us.

2 Cor. 5:18-21

18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

**Secular Forgiveness is Superficial Resulting
in Isolation and Tolerance -- Not Reconciliation**

Our society has become so exaggeratedly individualistic that forgiveness has become superficial. This “forgiveness” is often a one-way process -- a private releasing of another. It focuses primarily on the freedom found by the forgiver and excludes further interaction with the offender. This is sometimes practiced by Christians to relieve their conscience because the Bible commands forgiveness.

Secular forgiveness makes little attempt at reconciliation or restoration of the relationship. Thus, the broken relationship

continues with one or more of the following negative reactions:

- Isolating one's self and remaining at a distance to the offending party, avoiding any contact at all cost.
 - Tolerating the person should association be required.
 - Refusing to see the Father's view of the other person (His son and our brother) as precious.
 - Displaying a self-righteous attitude of: "I am better than him" or "I have done nothing wrong; it is all his fault."
 - Continue to point out faults in the other person to justify and cover our own unwillingness to forgive and reconcile the relationship.
- **As common as this practice is, it is destructive to human relationships and inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible. This sin will hinder our spiritual growth and effectiveness in the Father's business. If not corrected, it will lead to eternal death.**
 - **To put it simply, biblical forgiveness taught and exemplified by Jesus, involves both forgiveness and reconciliation of the relationship.**

Consequences of an Unreconciled Relationship

It is wise to seek forgiveness before:

- The wound has become infected.
- The molehill mushrooms into a mountain.
- The seemingly harmless young pet lion cub of offense grows into a mature ferocious lion of bitterness.

In *Psalms 91*, King David addresses trampling and destroying the young lion: “*Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the **young lion** and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.*”

Apostle Paul admonishes us to pursue peace and holiness to prevent a root of bitterness that would defile others: “*Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any **root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled***” (Heb. 12:14-15).

Only God’s perfect love working in us can restore a relationship. If this process is not pursued, we will most likely live in the past, frozen in time at the point of the offense, obstructing the flow of God’s perfect love and power through us.

Rev. David Shatwell stated in his message, *The Tragedy of a Wounded Spirit*: “When we build walls in our life of unforgiveness, isolation and avoidance of a brother, it becomes a barrier that hinders the flow of God’s Spirit through our lives.” Refer to Chart N-5, “Our Love to God is Measured by Our Love to Our Brother”, in Appendix 1.

When we are a victim of injustice (or a perceived injustice) and fail to pursue forgiveness and reconciliation, we become a victim twice over -- a victim of injustice, then a victim of systemic bitterness. The tragedy of bitterness is that it will cause the person to inflict hurt on others -- perpetuating the cycle of violence.

Miroslav Volf states: “To triumph fully, evil needs two victories, not one. The first victory happens when an evil deed is perpetrated; the second victory, when evil is returned. After

the first victory, evil would die if the second victory did not infuse it with new life.”³

Mahatma Gandhi said, **“An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind.”**

When someone treats us wrong, we must quickly forgive to prevent their wrongdoing from being permanently stored in the computer of our mind. Apostle Paul declares that: *“Love keeps no record of wrongs.”*

1 Cor. 13:5

5 Love does not demand its own way, and it keeps no record of being wronged. NLT

5 Love (God's love in us) takes no account of the evil done to it [it pays no attention to a suffered wrong]. AMP

- **The refusal to forgive and reconcile creates a toxic memory that poisons the present and contaminates the future.**

Some prisoners of war have suffered terrible atrocities of physical and mental torture. In the ensuing years, after the war, their lives took one of two courses:

- (1) Those who forgave their tormentors returned to the outside world and rebuilt their lives.
- (2) Those who nursed their bitterness remained invalids and victims of bygone hurts, and were unable to enter a normal productive life.

Likewise, anyone who has been offended by a brother has the same two choices:

1.	Extend the same forgiveness, reconciliation and perfect love that God has extended to us. This will bring healing that propels us forward in our Christian walk, spiritual growth and increased effectiveness in the Kingdom.
2.	Continue to harbor unforgiveness and refuse reconciliation. In time, it will turn to bitterness creating a tightly closed circle of self-centered, self-inflicted pain. This will handicap our Christian walk, stunt our spiritual growth and cause us to be less effective in the mission of the Kingdom.

It is this simple and straight forward:

- (1) With forgiveness and reconciliation, it is a **win, win, win, win**: A win for us, our offender, for those in our personal harvest field, and our heavenly Father is pleased.
- (2) With unforgiveness and failure to pursue reconciliation, it is a **lose, lose, lose, lose**: a loss for us, a loss for our offender, a loss for those in our personal harvest field, and our heavenly Father is displeased.

Eternal Consequences: At the end of our time on earth, whether we live a full life or face a premature death, only two things will matter: our relationship with God and our brother (*the two things that transcend eternity*). This invokes the two commandments that Jesus declared as a fulfillment of the entire Law: “*Loving God with all your heart and loving your neighbor as yourself.*”

The most dreadful and frightening thing as we cross over from the temporal to the eternal, from the terrestrial to the celestial, is to have an unreconciled relationship with God or our fellow man.

Forgive to Be Forgiven

God's forgiveness is completely and totally linked to our forgiveness to others -- the two go hand in hand. In giving forgiveness to a brother we receive forgiveness from the Father. In reconciling with a brother who has injured us, we receive the benefit of reconciliation with the Father whom we have injured.

“Christian forgiveness is not simply a private matter between the sinner and God. Forgiveness has a horizontal dimension as well. This is why in the Lord's Prayer we ask God to forgive us, while in the same breath pledging to forgive others. Forgiveness is God's way of achieving peace. In fact, it is ultimately the only way of achieving peace between alienated parties.”⁴

- **The Lord's prayer can be a blessing or a curse. Because in reality we are praying: “Lord deal with me as I have dealt with my brother. Forgive me as I have forgiven my brother or withhold your forgiveness as I have withheld it from my brother.”**

Matt. 6:14-15

14 If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you.

15 But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins. NLT

14 In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. You can't get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others.

15 If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God's part. MSG

If we accept the forgiveness and reconciliation given by Jesus Christ, we must embrace His commandment to forgive and reconcile with a brother. As recipients of Christ's forgiving grace, we are called to extend it to others. Jesus calls us to give what we have freely received – unlimited love and forgiveness.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer says in, *The Cost of Discipleship*: “The call to follow Christ always means a call to share the work of forgiving men their sins. Forgiveness is the Christ-like suffering which is the Christian's duty to bear.”

George Herbert observes: “One that cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which all must pass if they would ever reach heaven: for everyone has to be forgiven.”

Forgiving and being forgiven are all one process, they cannot be separated.

- **If we have found forgiveness and reconciliation in our relationship with Jesus Christ, then to truly be His disciple, we must become forgiving people that pursue reconciliation in a fractured relationship with a brother.**

For those who refuse to forgive and reconcile with their brother they follow the example of the self-righteous Scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day:

- Rules were more important than relationship.
- Retribution was more important than restoration.
- Punishment was more important than pardon.

Charles Spurgeon reminds us: “To be forgiven is such sweetness that honey is tasteless in comparison with it. But yet there is one thing sweeter still, and that is to forgive. As it is more blessed to give than to receive, so to forgive raises a stage higher in experience than to be forgiven.”

John Piper states: “The greatest risk we face as a church in these days is not that we may lose an organ, or that we may lose money, or that we may lose members, or that we may lose staff, or that we may lose reputation. The greatest risk is that we may lose heaven. Because **one way to lose heaven is to hold fast to an unforgiving spirit** and so prove that we have never been indwelt by the Spirit of Christ.”⁵

When we understand the great debt that God has forgiven us, how can we be unforgiving to others who owe us so little in comparison? The timeless Law of God, included in the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples, states: ***“Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us.”***

Luke 11:4

And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us [who has offended us or done us wrong].
AMP

- **If we cling to an unforgiving spirit, we will not be forgiven by God. If we continue on that path, then we will be denied entrance to heaven, because heaven is the dwelling place of forgiven and forgiving people.**

- **Love, mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation are all two-way streets. To receive, we must give:**
 - Love your brother as God has loved you.
 - Forgive as you have been forgiven by God.
 - Show mercy as God has shown you mercy.
 - Reconcile with a brother as God has reconciled with you.
 - Freely you have received, freely give.

Col. 3:13-15

*13 Be gentle and forbearing with one another and, if one has a difference (a grievance or complaint) against another, **readily pardoning** each other; even as the Lord has [freely] forgiven you, so must you also [forgive].*

14 And above all these [put on] love and enfold yourselves with the bond of perfectness [which binds everything together completely in ideal harmony].

15 And let the peace (soul harmony which comes) from Christ rule (act as umpire continually) in your hearts [deciding and settling with finality all questions that arise in your minds, in that peaceful state] to which as [members of Christ's] one body you were also called [to live]. And be thankful (appreciative), [giving praise to God always]. AMP

James 2:13

*There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But **if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you.** NLT*

Matthew Chapter 18 contains Jesus' teaching on His perfect love and a warning of the consequences for the unforgiving. To emphasize the importance of forgiveness and to ensure that

His disciples totally understood this message, Jesus related this parable:

Matt. 18:21-22

21 Then Peter came to him and asked, “Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?”

22 “No, not seven times,” Jesus replied, “but seventy times seven!” NLT

Jesus then told the following parable of a debtor who owed the king \$10,000,000.

The Kingdom of heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date. One of his debtors owed him \$10,000,000. He had no way to pay the king this large amount. Therefore the king then ordered him, also his wife, his children and everything he had to be sold. The man fell down before the king and begged for mercy and for him to be patient with him until he could pay his debt.

The king then had compassion on him, released him and forgave his debt. But when the man left the king’s palace, he remembered a man who owed him \$2,000. He found the man and demanded that he pay him immediately. The man begged for a little time to get the money so he could pay him. But he wouldn’t listen to him and instead had the man arrested and put into prison until the debt was paid in full.

When the king heard what this man had done, he was very angry. He said, “You evil-hearted man! I forgave you of the huge debt, just because you asked me to. And you couldn’t forgive your debtor of that small amount?” The angry king sent the man to prison until he could pay all that was due him.

Jesus summed up this parable by stating: *“So shall my heavenly Father do to you if you refuse to truly forgive your brothers” (Matt. 18 35). TLB*

This parable describes in detail how God feels about us when we do not forgive a brother. He reverses His forgiveness of our sins and dooms us to eternal torment if we do not correct this fatal sin!

- **If we love God, we will not receive forgiveness from His hand for our \$10,000,000 debt and withhold it from our \$2,000 debtor.**

The carnal man tends to see only two options when there has been an infraction -- **payment or punishment**. The perpetrators of wrong or hurt must be made to pay, and if they can't pay, then they must be punished. But Jesus offers the perfect option for us to pursue with His perfect love -- and that is **pardon**.

Brian Zahnd states: “Just as wrongs cannot be erased by punishment or repayment, they cannot really be erased by simple forgiveness either. **Forgiveness does not erase the tragedy of a wrong, but it does transcend it!** When the master forgives the servant's debt, the debt does not simply disappear. The master takes the loss! He accepts the full brunt and absorbs the debt himself.”⁶ This is what Jesus did for us and calls us to do for an offender.

Thomas Watson, about 300 years ago answers the question: When do we forgive others? “When we strive against all thoughts of revenge; when we will not do our enemies mischief, but wish well to them, grieve at their calamities, pray

for them, seek reconciliation with them, and show ourselves ready on all occasions to relieve them.”

The Offense is Usually Mutual -- Both Parties Have Been Injured -- Both Need Forgiveness

In almost every fractured relationship, the hurt is usually mutual -- both parties have been injured in some way. Rarely is the offense or injury one-sided. More often than not both have contributed to the misunderstanding.

It is strange that often one or both of the parties of the rifted relationship consider themselves innocent. And in most cases, if someone thinks they are the only ones that have been injured, they are inward focused and self-righteous. They ignore the possibility that they have contributed to the rift. It may have simply been a wrong attitude displayed or a misunderstanding.

-- From “Radical Forgiveness”

Justice is often a matter of perspective. Being sincerely convinced of the rightness of our own cause is no guarantee that we are actually in the right. Deception concerning the rightness of our cause may be the most common form of self-deception.

When we are looking at each other through the sights of our guns we see only the rightness of our own cause. When we have a stake in the matter, we have a natural tendency to oversimplify what constitutes justice, and often *justice* is little more than *me getting my way*.⁷

Since most of us are often ignorant about how our own attitudes and actions appear to others:

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- We should always conduct our actions and conversations in the spirit of humility and unity.
- We should seek and listen for constructive feedback regarding our interactions with others.
- Our goal should be to improve our actions that give preference to others.

When the hurt is mutual (which is often the case) neither person has the right to say, “I forgive you,” for both need forgiveness. God’s perfect love working in us will not say, “I forgive you” (*I am right, you are wrong*); but “please forgive me” (*I want to understand and correct my offensive actions*).

- **To say, “*I forgive you*”, can be subtly tainted with a superiority attitude, concealing a hidden accusation while displaying a self-righteous spirit.**

God’s perfect love flowing through us will cause us to accept responsibility for our part of the blame. The result will be an attitude of humility, reconciliation, restoration and acceptance that opens the door for mutual forgiveness and love.

- **If we can love an enemy, surely we can do the same and more for a brother in Christ.**

The Spirit of Offense: A Sign of the Endtime

The disciples asked Jesus privately on the Mount of Olives: “*What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world*”? Recorded in both Matthew and Mark, Jesus responded that one sign, in addition to the violence of wars between nations, would be offense and violence between brothers.

Biblical Forgiveness Involves Reconciliation of the Relationship

Mark 13:7-8, 12

7 And you will hear of wars and threats of wars, but don't panic. Yes, these things must take place, but the end won't follow immediately.

8 Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

12 A brother will betray his brother to death, a father will betray his own child, and children will rebel against their parents and cause them to be killed. NLT

Matt. 24:10

*And then shall **many be offended**, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.*

The virus of violence has seeped into the bloodstream of our world in a dimension not previously known to man. Our world uses violence in resolving their differences. This spirit of the Antichrist is rapidly rising in our world today and is subtly attempting to infiltrate the church.

The carnal man condones and seeks conflict. He loves to fight. A carnal Christian may not be living under the Wild West lawlessness where using a gun was the easiest solution -- kill the offender. But he loves living under the Law of the Old Testament -- "*An eye for an eye.*"

The self-righteous method is to dispose of the problem by disposing of the person with whom there is a disagreement. This is not done by physically killing them, but by assassinating their character (being judgmental and critical), or isolating ones self from them (terminating the relationship).

The urge to get even comes naturally. To deliver insult for insult, blow for blow, injury for injury, the Law of "an eye for

an eye” is the oldest one in the world. But Jesus said, “*You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say, **do not resist an evil person!** If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles*” (Matt. 5:38-39, 41). *NLT*

When someone treats us wrong, Jesus instructs us to act out our forgiveness -- displaying a spirit of love and peace. Turning an unprotected cheek states, “I’m not going to back away because our relationship matters too much to build walls of defense and isolation between us.” Going a second mile, offering a second chance are acts of acceptance -- acts that move us one step toward reconciliation.

Satan’s best strategy is to inject his spirit of offense into the church with disunity, isolation and rifts in relationships. Because he cannot destroy the church from the outside, he lays his subtle trap of offense and disunity from within -- causing a blockage in the flow of perfect love within the body of Christ.

To the extent that Christians have less than loving relationships in the family of God, they are cooperating with satan. If this goes uncorrected, their effectiveness in reaching a lost world with the message of God’s perfect love will be greatly diminished.

How can we, as Christians, proclaim God's perfect love as the solution to a sinner's estrangement from the Father, if we can't extend it to our brother in the family of God?

How can we as ministers proclaim the necessity of God's perfect love flowing in the brotherhood, if we can't pursue reconciliation with a fellow minister?

There is only **one heaven** and we must lovingly and humbly resolve any rifts in our relationships and live in unity with our brothers on this side of eternity. If God's children are planning to go to the same heaven, why do some have such a difficult time getting along with each other here on earth? The following poem captures this concept perfectly:

**To live above with saints we love,
will certainly be glory.
To live below with saints we know,
well that's another story!⁸**

Those with unresolved relationships and attitudes of disunity in the brotherhood are jeopardizing their entry to their eternal home in heaven.

The Works of the Flesh

Along with the works of the flesh, that we Christians feel we have overcome, are the "white" sins of self that create disunity and division in the body of Christ: criticism, dissension (disagreement, especially partisan and contentious), division, selfish ambition, strife. These are listed with the terrible sins

of adultery, fornication, witchcraft, etc. and, “*They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*”

Gal. 5:19-21, 26

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

*20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, **emulations, wrath, strife**, seditions, heresies,*

21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

*20 **Constant effort to get the best for yourself, complaints and criticisms, the feeling that everyone else is wrong except those in your own little group.** TLB*

*20 **Quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division.** NLT*

-- From “The Bait of Satan”

Offense itself is not deadly -- if it stays in the trap. But if we pick it up and consume it and feed on it in our hearts, then we have become offended. Offended people produce much fruit, such as hurt, anger, outrage, jealousy, resentment, strife, bitterness, isolation, and envy.

Often those who are offended do not even realize they are trapped. They are oblivious to their condition because they are so focused on the wrong that was done to them. They are in denial. Acquiring an offense keeps

you from seeing your own character flaws because blame is deferred to another.

It doesn't matter how up to date you are in new revelations from the many seminars and Bible schools you've attended or how many books you've read or even how many hours you pray and study. If you are offended and in un-forgiveness, you have not come to the knowledge of the truth. You are deceived, and you confuse others with your hypocritical lifestyle. No matter what the revelation, your fruit tells a different story. You will become a spring of bitter waters that will bring deception, not truth.

Our response to an offense determines our future. When you realize that Jesus delivered you from eternal death and torment, you will release others unconditionally. Offense is a serious sin. If it is not dealt with, offense will eventually lead to death.⁹

If we let another person's actions determine our reactions, or let another's violence move us to violence, we violate the law of perfect love and lose the opportunity of healing that comes only through forgiveness and reconciliation. If we show no mercy, do not hope for mercy; if we extend no forgiveness, we can expect none.

Jesus Christ -- Our Perfect Example of Forgiveness and Reconciliation

During his life, Jesus Christ exemplified how we should react to hurts from our fellow man. When beaten inhumanely, He accepted it in silence and without hesitation. Then, in His

agony of suffering on the cross, He prayed for His tormentors to be forgiven.

- **The extreme importance of this event is elevated by all four gospel writers recording the torture and punishment of Jesus. Apostle Peter then affirms the loving and peaceful response of Jesus to this inhumane physical and mental abuse.**

Matt. 26:67-68

*67 Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands,
68 Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?*

Mark 15:17, 19-20

*17 And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head,
19 And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him.
20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.*

Luke 23:33-34

*33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.
34 Then said Jesus, **Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.** And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.*

John 19:1-3

1 Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.

Biblical Forgiveness Involves Reconciliation of the Relationship

2 And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe,

3 And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands.

1 Peter 2:22-23

22 He was guilty of no sin, neither was deceit (guile) ever found on His lips.

23 When He was reviled and insulted, He did not revile or offer insult in return; [when] He was abused and suffered, He made no threats [of vengeance]; but he trusted [Himself and everything] to Him Who judges fairly. AMP

Additional Scriptures: Isa. 53:7, Luke 22:63-65, John 19:1-3.

- **When we follow Christ's example of loving reactions in response to mistreatment, we forgive and move toward reconciliation with the offender -- stopping the cycle of violence.**
- **When we take up our cross and follow Jesus, we will emulate what He did on the cross. We will forgive and sincerely pray for our offender -- asking God to not hold them responsible for their offensive actions: "*Father forgive them for they know not what they do!*"**

Forgiveness by Stephen the First Christian Martyr

Stephen (*as a son of God*) prayed the same prayer, as he was being stoned to death that Jesus (*the Son of God*) prayed for His tormentors as He was dying on the cross:

Acts 6:8-10

8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders

and miracles among the people.

9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

Acts 7:58, 60

58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him.

*60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, **Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.** And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

- **When we take up our cross and become a disciple of Jesus, we will respond like Stephen. As a son of God, we will forgive and pray for our offenders -- that God will not hold them responsible for their offensive actions: “*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*”**

When we respond to an infraction by a brother in an un-Christian way, we cooperate with the powers of darkness to continue the cycle of violence. When we forgive, we are stopping the cycle of violence and emulating the divine nature of Jesus Christ.

- **The story of our hurt can be one of, “isolation, bitterness and unforgiveness” or one of “miraculous forgiveness and reconciliation.”**

10. Love Perfected by the Refiner's Fire and the Cross

God's two chief change agents in Scripture are the Refiner's fire (Old Testament) and the cross (New Testament). Both represent trial and suffering that God uses to purify and change us -- allowing God's perfect love to increase in our lives.

What breaks the Father's heart the most is when His children do not respond to His loving hand of correction. The Potter's hand can only mold the clay when there is pliability in submission to His will. The Potter's wheel is effective when we willingly yield to the pressure of the Master's hand in our lives.

- **God's Word declares that no one will enter heaven's portals without having been tested and tried.**

Acts 14:22

Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

10.1 The Refiner's Fire

The refiner's fire heats a valuable metal like gold to a melting point, not to destroy it, but to reveal and remove the impurities. The Refiner's fire of trial and suffering is God's process to purify His children and perfect His love in their lives. Job testifies of the purifying power in affliction: ***"When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."***

Gold that is submitted to the fire becomes refined and pure. The application of fire separates every particle of impurity and leaves only pure metal. So it is with fiery trials applied to the child of God.

Zech. 13:9

*And I will bring the third part through the **fire**, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.*

1 Peter 1:7

*That the **trial of your faith**, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be **tried with fire**, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:*

Mal. 3:2-3

*2 **He is like a refiner's fire**, and like fullers' soap:*

*3 And **he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver**: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and **purge them as gold and silver**, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.*

This verse puzzled some women in a Bible study and they wondered what this statement meant about the character and nature of God. One of the women offered to find out the process of refining silver and get back to the group at their next Bible study.

That week, the woman called a silversmith and made an appointment to watch him at work. She didn't mention anything about the reason for her interest beyond her curiosity about the process of refining silver. As she watched the silversmith, he held a piece of silver over the fire and let it heat up. He explained that in refining silver, one needed to hold the silver in the middle of the fire where the flames were hottest as to burn away all the impurities.

The woman thought about God holding us in such a hot spot; then she thought again about the verse that says, *"He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver."* She asked the silversmith if it was true that he had to sit there in front of the fire the whole time the silver was being refined. The man answered that yes, he not only had to sit there holding the silver, but he had to keep his eyes on the silver the entire time it was in the fire. If the silver was left a moment too long in the flames, it would be destroyed.

The woman was silent for a moment. Then she asked the silversmith, "How do you know when the silver is fully refined?" He smiled at her and answered, "Oh, that's easy -- **when I see my image in it.**"

Additional Scriptures: Psalms 66:10, 12, Isa. 48:10.

Fire Reveals Imperfect Love

If we are feeling the heat of the fire from what we consider unfair treatment by a brother, remember God has His eye on us. He may allow the heat of His fire to burn until He sees His image and His perfect love in us.

- **When the Refiner's process is complete, we will have the humility and love to truly pursue forgiveness and reconciliation of a broken relationship.**

Some trials, like sickness, battle our flesh (our bodies). But, some trials assault our soul (mind and emotions), as people hurt us with their actions and words. These trials are often more difficult to endure. This chapter will review the fiery trials of Job and Joseph, because their greatest pain came from the actions of family and friends.

The fruit of the Spirit is grown more beautifully in a life when the demand for it is caused by hurts from those who should support and love us. This test may be allowed by God to reveal a dormant spirit of offense and the need for perfect love to develop in our life.

Fire alone will expose impurities in gold. God has made us as gold, but impurities must be identified and removed. So when we experience the Refiner's fire, we should not get angry with the person God uses to build the fire. Instead, we should thank Him for allowing this to reveal the spirit of offense that was dormant in our life.

The wrong we suffered did not cause us to be offended. The dormant spirit of offense in our life was awakened by someone's offending actions. The embers of offense (pride) were merely fueled by the fire God sent through someone's actions.

If we do not have the spirit of offense in our life, we cannot be offended. We will live in a state of forgiving and being forgiven:

- I forgive you today for the wrong you may do to me tomorrow.
- I understand it is God's will for people to hurt me – to test me for a spirit of offense.
- I want to be Christ-like -- more interested in reconciliation than placing blame.
- I am willing to take the blame (like Jesus) in order to initiate reconciliation.

If people are easily offended, possibly the offense is not real. It may be imagined or exaggerated by their own spirit of offense. When we react wrongfully to another's actions, we take ourselves beyond God's healing and comfort. God cannot heal our hurts unless we humble ourselves and display His love. He forgives us as we forgive others; He grants mercy as we give mercy. Then His healing touch can calm the storm or calm us in the storm.

There can be a vicious cycle of hurt without cure until perfect love and humility bring forgiveness and reconciliation. Worse than the original act of offense is the wrong reaction -- unforgiveness, bitterness and isolation that lasts sometimes for decades.

To better understand this truth, let's examine the lives of Joseph and Job who submitted to the Refiner's fire. Their love for family and friends was severely tested when they were wrongfully accused and mistreated.

Joseph's Fiery Trial

Joseph's life presents a beautiful portrayal of forgiveness. He was subjected to more **long-term suffering** than any other Old Testament character. It began when he was a young boy and ended many years later:

- Hated by his brothers.
- Thrown into a deep pit.
- Sold to an Ishmaelite caravan en route to Egypt.
- Sold as a common slave.
- Rewarded by his master for his excellent work.
- Falsely accused by his master's wife of assault.
- Thrown into an inescapable dungeon in a foreign country .
- Loved ones didn't know his whereabouts.
- Lost in the prison system, without intercessors or advocates.
- Undoubtedly wondered why his father did not rescue him.
- Forgotten by the king's cup bearer for many months after Joseph interpreted his dream in prison.
- Served 13 years as a slave and a prisoner.
- Approximately 22 years expired before he was reunited with his family.

We might be tempted to ask: "How much can a man suffer from so many atrocities for so many years?" But this story concerns more than just Joseph and his family or preserving life through a seven year famine. This long and difficult trial became an all-time benchmark of human suffering allowed by God. This example of perfect love granted forgiveness and reconciliation to brothers who had planned to kill him.

No one, other than Jesus Christ, was called on to forgive more than Joseph. He never let bitterness into his life because he had a great relationship with his God. God's love provided forgiveness in response to each evil deed -- preventing bitterness to accumulate in his heart. His forgiving spirit tempered his life because he remained the same, whether a slave or a ruler.

When his brothers visited Egypt, Joseph refused revenge for his lost years. Rather, he pursued reconciliation, forgiving and imparting undeserved mercy and love for their wrongdoing. The only story that exceeds this depth of forgiveness, is God coming to this world and dying in our place, so that we could be reconciled with Him.

God's Will for Joseph to Suffer: It was God's plan for Joseph to experience the pain of the Refiner's fire and to suffer through a long, difficult trial: *"Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive"* (Gen. 45:5, 20).

- **Joseph's response to the Refiner's fire is an excellent testimony of love, chiseled in the stone of eternity, as a shining example for us to follow.**

It is God's will for people to mistreat us. God allows this hurt to reveal to us the hidden sin of offense. The impurities in gold and silver are revealed when the fire is applied -- the fires of trial, hurt and wrongs done against us. Our heavenly Father imparts His favor and blessings to those who emulate a Christ-like attitude and response of perfect love.

The Key Message of Joseph's Trial

- **Joseph's dream sustained him in fiery trial, causing him to embrace the plan of God that led him through the fire.**
- **When the trial ended, Joseph stood as pure gold in body, soul and spirit; not damaged, but refined by the fire.**
- **One of the harshest trials in history produced one of the greatest products of the Refiner's fire, and one of the greatest miracles of deliverance -- promotion from the pit to the palace in one day.**

Joseph Was Broken and Changed by Being Squeezed and Released

Squeezed and Broken	Released and Blessed
Joseph was mistreated by his brothers and thrown in a pit.	Then he was released from the pit.
Joseph was sold to an Ishmaelite caravan going to Egypt.	Then he was released to serve in Potiphar's house.
Joseph was accused of a crime; hopelessly imprisoned without intercessors or advocates.	Then he was released from prison and promoted to the palace to rule the world.

The process of brokenness is being squeezed and released. Like a sponge being squeezed, self must be removed to allow God to fill us with Himself. God can fill only what we release to Him. If we hold onto rooms in our heart, we do not allow His perfect love to completely control our lives. He desires to fill us with His perfect love so we can flow it unrestricted to others.

Job's Fiery Trial -- a Physical Loss

Life was going very well with Job. He had a large family, wealth, and blessings of fame and honor. At that time, Job may have been the richest man on the face of the earth: *"He had seven sons and three daughters, and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East"* (Job 1:2-3).

In Job Chapters 1-3, God tests Job's faithfulness through allowing satan to attack him. God told satan, *"Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him."*

In one day Job lost all of his possession and his children:

- Five hundred oxen and 500 donkeys were stolen by the Sabeans and the servants were killed.
- Seven thousand sheep were destroyed in a fire from heaven and the servants were killed.
- The Chaldeans stole 3,000 camels and killed the servants.
- His ten children were killed in a tornado.

A few days later Job is stricken with painful boils from the sole of his feet to the crown of his head. His wife even tells him to curse God and die: *"Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"* (Job 2: 9-10).

In the midst of all of this unspeakable physical, emotional and mental anguish Job retained his integrity and remained faithful to God: *"In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly"* (Job 1:22).

Job's first test was **physical loss**:

- Loss of family -- ten children.
- Loss of wealth -- all possessions.
- Loss of health -- painful boils covering his body.
- Loss of his wife's support -- her advice: *"Curse God and die."*

Job expresses his overwhelming grief and faith in God:

- I am in so much pain and despair; I wish I had never been born.
- I don't know where God is, but He knows where I am.
- When God finishes His fiery refining process, I shall come forth as pure gold.

Job 3:3

Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, there is a man child conceived.

Job 23:8-10

8 Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him:

9 On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him:

10 But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

Job's Fiery Trial -- a Test of His Spirit

Job's second test occurred when his "friends" accused him of great wrongdoing and sin. This was even more painful because of false accusations by those who should have loved and supported him.

Job 2:13

So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.

After seven days of silence, each friend began to unfairly accuse Job of wrongdoing. The first one, Eliphaz, said: "*Stop and think! Have you ever known a truly good and innocent person who was punished? Experience teaches that it is those who sow sin and trouble who harvest the same. They die beneath the hand of God. My advice to you is this: Go to God and confess your sins to him*" (Job 4:7-9, 5:8). TLB

Another friend, Bildad said: "*Does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right? When your children sinned against him, he gave them over to the penalty of their sin*" (Job 8:3-4). NIV

Job's trial now exceeded the physical loss as the Refiner's fire gets hotter and more painful. It tests Job's spirit for any trace of offense and wrong reaction, as his friends continued their verbal assault.

The Restoration of Job

After Job forgave and prayed for his friends, God restored:

- His family -- seven sons and three daughters.
- His health -- 140 more years to live.
- His wealth -- doubled what he had before.

Job 42:10, 12

10 Then, when Job prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his wealth and happiness! In fact, the Lord gave him twice as much as before!

12 So the Lord blessed Job at the end of his life more than at the beginning. TLB

Job reached across the dispensation of the Law to the dispensation of Grace and embraced the teaching of Jesus:

Matt. 5:44-45

*44 I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and **pray for them which despitefully use you**, and persecute you;*

45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.

The Key Message of Job's Trial

- **The Refiner's fire is a necessary part of God's plan to perfect those living a godly life and doing no wrong. The only way to detect hidden impurities in our heart is to experience the Refiner's fire.**
- **Regardless of the tremendous suffering of a trial, God is pleased only as we humbly submit to His loving hand of testing and correction.**

10.2 The Cross

To be like Christ and to become a partaker of His divine nature encompasses three dimensions:

1. **Act like Christ** -- to carry our cross.
2. **React like Christ** -- to be crucified with Him -- dying to the carnal man. Responding in a Christ-like way when people treat us wrong.
3. **Duplicate the ministry of Christ** -- to follow in the footsteps of His miracle ministry.

React Like Christ

This second dimension of Christian living is more difficult than the first because it is reacting rightly when we are mistreated or falsely accused. Here, we experience the meaning of being crucified with Christ.

Jesus knew this would be a difficult test for His followers; so He left us His example and His Word for breaking the cycle of violence -- repaying evil with good.

Luke 6:32, 35-36

32 If you love only the people who love you, why should you receive a blessing? Even sinners love those who love them!

*35 No! **Love your enemies and do good to them; lend and expect nothing back.** You will then have a great reward, and you will be children of the Most High God. For he is good to the ungrateful and the wicked. [He loves His sinner children, and expects us to do the same].*

*36 **Be merciful** just as your Father is merciful. GNT*

- **Many people are willing to carry their cross, but fewer are willing to be nailed to it. While we cannot nail ourselves to the cross -- a brother can.**

When someone treats us wrong, consider:

- It is not about us and them -- it is about us and Him.
- God may be testing us to see whether the carnal man is dead.
- It is God's will for people to hurt us because only our own wrong response will reveal a dormant spirit of offense.

If we are aspiring to be like Jesus Christ, we must live near the cross and continuously follow the example of His loving reaction to:

- False accusations and physical abuse at His trial.
- Inhumane beating by the cruel Roman soldiers.
- Indescribable pain inflicted at His crucifixion and His subsequent painful death.
- Abandonment by His followers and disciples.

The source of Jesus' suffering was the religious leaders who should have been His greatest supporters. Even His disciples, who had followed Him and witnessed His miraculous ministry, forsook Him.

When the source of our hurt comes from family or friends, we can emulate the example of Jesus' suffering foretold by Isaiah hundreds of years before the event: ***"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. He was oppressed, and he was***

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afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth” (Isa. 53:3, 7).

Apostle Paul addressed being **crucified with Christ**:

Gal. 2:20

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

1 Cor. 15:31

*I die daily [I face death every day and **die to self**]. AMP*

- **The symbol of Christianity is the cross, so we should expect trials and suffering in our Christian walk.**

11. God's Perfect Love for Us

Man's love is natural and finite. God's love is supernatural and infinite. God's love is perfect: in-explainable, unspeakable, unending, unselfish, unmerited, redeeming, compassionate, and so much more. His love is perfect because God is perfect in all His ways. His love supersedes human love because it is impartial, unconditional and eternal. God's love (agape love) is freely given by the Lover and it expects nothing in return. He loved us while we were still in sin and did not love Him: "*God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Rom. 5:8).

Dieter F. Uchtdorf said: "Though we are incomplete, God loves us completely. Though we are imperfect, He loves us perfectly. Though we may feel lost and without compass, God's love encompasses us completely. He loves every one of us, even those who are flawed, rejected, awkward, sorrowful, or broken."

It is impossible for a finite being to adequately describe an infinite God. He is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent,

immeasurable, unfathomable and so much more. He has no equal or opposite to which He can be compared. God affirms this about Himself throughout Scripture:

Isa. 46:5

To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?

Job 38:4, 6

4 Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding.

6 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the corner stone thereof?

Apostle Paul picks up this same theme regarding God's infinite greatness in his epistles to the Romans and Ephesians:

Rom. 11:33

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unfathomable (inscrutable, unsearchable) are His judgments (His decisions)! And how untraceable (mysterious, undiscoverable) are His ways (His methods, His paths)! AMP

Eph. 1:21

Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named [above every title that can be conferred], not only in this age and in this world, but also in the age and the world which are to come. AMP

Just as it is impossible to describe God it is equally impossible to describe God's perfect love, for God is love. The most vivid characteristic of God is not simply that God "loves," but that God is love itself. Love is not merely one of His attributes, but His very nature.

Therefore the characteristics and attributes of God and God's love are completely consistent and congruent. To understand and experience more of God is to understand and experience more of His love.

Two times in the same chapter Apostle John repeats the truth that **“God is love”**:

1 John 4:8

*He that loveth not knoweth not God; for **God is love**.*

1 John 4:16

***God is love**; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

-- From The Pulpit Commentary

[God is love], 1 John 4:8. St. John again varies the thought, this time very remarkably. Instead of “love is of God” (verse 7), we have ‘**God is Love**’ - a far deeper thought.” We must beware of watering down “God is Love” into “God is loving,” or even “God of all beings is the most loving.” Love is not a mere attribute of God. Only when this strong meaning is given to the statement does St. John's argument hold, that “he that loveth not knoweth not God.” A man who has no idea of any one of the attributes of God, as order, or beauty, or power, or justice, has an imperfect knowledge of God. But he who has no idea of love has no knowledge of God, for love is Himself. God alone loves in the fullest and highest sense of the word; for he alone loves with perfect fairness and impartiality.¹

Understanding the love of God is like trying to capture the full force of the Niagara Falls with a teaspoon. God's love can never be fully understood, but it can be seen:

- As He prayed and wept for a lost world with strong emotions of crying and tears: ***“Who in the days of his flesh offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears”***.
- As He wept over the city of Jerusalem: ***“And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it.”***
- In His ministry of compassion and healing.
- In the shortest Bible verse that simply says: ***“Jesus wept”***.

The love of God can best be felt as we kneel at the foot of the cross and sense His great suffering and dying in our place to provide eternal life. The cross is the ultimate expression of God's incomprehensible love to mankind.

R. Ezell states: “How do you describe a rose to a blind person? How do you describe Handel's Hallelujah Chorus to a deaf person? How do you describe the thrill of down hill skiing to one who has never walked?”

A.W. Tozer, struggling to explain God's love, said: “I can no more do justice to this awesome and wonder-filled topic than a child can grasp a star. Still, by reaching toward the star the child may call attention to it and even indicate the direction one must look to see it. And so, I stretch my heart toward the high, shining love of God so that I may be encouraged to look up and have hope.”

I cannot fully understand God's perfect love and words fail me in trying to describe it. But, the most important thing I have ever learned, I learned at the age of four in Sunday school. And that is: "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

"Jesus loves me" is the central affirmation of the Christian faith and the cornerstone of His Church. When God says, "I love you", He is expressing that you matter to Him; you are a person of worth; you are valuable to Him. Regardless of what others think, in the eyes of your heavenly Father, you have great value and He loves you completely.

There is story of George Webber. He married his secretary, but after the wedding continued to treat her as an employee rather than a wife. He rarely gave her special attention and usually only called on her when he had a task for her to do. He was always absorbed in his business. He loved her very much, but many things went unsaid.

George's wife was diagnosed with cancer. She was confined to bed for a short time and unexpectedly died quietly in her sleep. After the funeral, George returned to their dark and empty house. Quite upset and grieving deeply, he wandered around the house thinking about the loss of the woman he loved. He sat beside her bed although he had not done so very often during her illness.

He noticed her diary, picked it up and thumbed through its pages. One entry caught his eye: "Yesterday he spent an hour with me. And it was like being in heaven. I love him so much." He turned a few more pages and read, "I listened all day to hear his steps in the hallway. And now it's late and he won't

have time to sit with me today.” George read a few more entries before throwing the book on the floor and running into the rain back to the cemetery. He fell on his wife’s grave in the mud, sobbing, “If only I had known . . . if only I had known.”

Is this how it is with us? Will we one day fall to our knees before God and say “If only I’d known, if only I’d known how much You loved me.” Just like George Webber, we can live our entire lives so engrossed, so captivated by our own agendas and schedules that we are essentially strangers to God -- ignoring His desire for an intimate, loving and growing relationship.

George had not spoken often to his wife about his love for her. But, God, on the other hand, has made it abundantly clear in His Word of how much He loves us and desires a close and loving relationship with us. We not only see God’s love in Word but in deed with His suffering and dying in our place at Calvary and His bountiful blessings of provision and comfort every day.

-- From The Biblical Illustrator

The perfecting of our love for God. There are few of us who know much of the depths of the love of God; our love is shallow. God’s perfect love is like a great mountain. The majority of travelers view it from afar or traverse the valley at its base: a few climb to a halting place on one of its elevated spurs whence they see a portion of its sublimities: here and there an adventurous traveler climbs a minor peak, and views glacier and alp at closer range; fewest of all are those who scale the top most pinnacle and tread the virgin snow.²

Solomon, the wisest man that has ever lived, depicts God's love with the analogy of the groom's exquisite provision (banquet house) and total protection (banner) for His bride: *"He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love [for love waved as a protecting and comforting banner over my head]" (Song of Solomon 2:4). AMP*

-- The Pulpit Commentary

The "banquet house" is the place where he royally entertains his friends. The "banner" represents the protection with which the king overshadows his beloved.

He covers me there with his fear-inspiring banner, love, which is terrible to all enemies. Her natural fear is overcome by the loving presence of the king, which covers her weakness like a banner. There can be no doubt of the meaning that the banner is the military banner, as the word is always so used (see Ps. 20:6; Num. 1:52; 2:2).¹

-- From Barnes' Notes

[His banner] As the standard is the rallying-point and guide of the individual soldier, so the bride, transplanted from a lowly station to new scenes of unaccustomed splendor, finds support and safety in her beloved. His "love" is her "banner."³

In all of the affairs of man, since the beginning of time, there has been nothing more tragic than a relationship when one stops loving and the other is still in love. Many poems, songs and books have been written depicting the many tears and broken hearts because of this tragedy.

The same is true concerning the love of God for us and our love for Him. He loves us unconditionally. God has always loved us and He always will. May we return that love as we pursue a greater relationship with Him.

Deut. 7:7-8, 13

7 The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people:

8 But because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

13 And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he swore unto thy fathers to give thee.

Psalms 103:8, 10-14, 17

8 The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy and loving-kindness.

10 He has not dealt with us after our sins nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

*11 For as the **heavens are high above the earth, so great are His mercy and loving-kindness** toward those who reverently and worshipfully fear Him.*

12 As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

13 As a father loves and pities his children, so the Lord loves and pities those who fear Him [with reverence, worship, and awe].

God's Perfect Love for Us

14 For He knows our frame, He [earnestly] remembers and imprints [on His heart] that we are dust.

17 But the mercy and loving-kindness of the Lord are from everlasting to everlasting upon those who reverently and worshipfully fear Him, and His righteousness is to children's children. AMP

Isa. 43:1-4

*1 Thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I **have redeemed thee**, I have called thee by thy name; **thou art mine**.*

2 When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

3 For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.

*4 Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and **I have loved thee**.*

The greatest love in this world is the love of a mother for her child, but God's love is far beyond the greatest of human love:

Isa. 49:15-16

*15 Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, **they may forget, yet will I not forget thee**.*

16 Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.

Jer. 31:3

The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 13:1

Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

Rom. 5:5, 8

5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Rom. 8:35, 38-39

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 John 3:1

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Additional Scriptures: Deut. 10:15, Deut. 23:5, Isa. 38:17, Isa. 54:13-14, 16-17, Hos. 14:4, Zeph. 3:17, Luke 12:32, John 14:23, John 15:9-10, 12, John 16:27, 2 Cor. 5:14, 2 Cor. 13:11, 14, Gal. 2:20, Eph. 2:4, Eph. 3:17, 19, Eph. 5:2, 2 Thess. 2:16, 2 Thess. 3:5, 1 John 4:9-10, 16, Rev. 3:19.

**The Perfect Love of God Provides the
Greatest Gift -- Cleansing from Sin and Eternal Life**

The most wonderful proof of God's perfect love was through His suffering and death at Calvary. His precious blood cleanses us from all sin -- providing us the unfathomable and invaluable gift of eternal life.

Over 500 years before Christ, Zechariah described Calvary in his prophetic writings: *"On that day a fountain will be opened for the dynasty of David and for the people of Jerusalem, a fountain to cleanse them from all their sins and impurity. And on that day, says the Lord of Heaven's Armies, I will erase idol worship throughout the land, so that even the names of the idols will be forgotten"* (Zech. 13:1-2).

John 19:34

But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.

1 Peter 1:18-19

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

PERFECT LOVE -- THE HIGHEST LAW AND STRONGEST FORCE

Rev. 1:5

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

Rev. 7:13-14

13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Additional Scriptures: Ezek. 36:25, John 1:29, Heb. 9:13-14, 1 Cor. 6:11, Titus 3:5, 1 John 1:7.

The following song provides a good description of how much God loves us:

So You Would Know How Much I Love You

Verse 1

How many times must I prove how much I love you,
How many ways must my love for you I show?
How many times must I rescue you from trouble,
For you to know just how much I love you.⁴

12. Our Love for God

To return the great love that God has for us, we should completely fall in love with Him. May we be so in love with Him that our purpose is lost in His; our kingdom is lost in His.

When we love the brotherhood with the perfect love of God, we are loving God because He accepts it as having been given to Him. When we flow the perfect love of Christ to the brotherhood, it flows back to the Head and we are loving God in return with His perfect love. When we have a breach in our relationship with a member in the body of Christ there is an impairment -- a blockage in the flow of perfect love to the brotherhood. And this also impairs the flow of our love to the Head of the body -- Jesus Christ. This was discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

When we minister to the needs of our Father's children (lost or saved), He accepts it as having been done to Him.

Loving God With All Our Heart

God's first and greatest commandment is to love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength.

- **“All” puts Him in the very center of our lives -- our relationships, our plans and our daily activities.**

When We Love Jesus Christ With All Our Heart, Soul and Mind – Perfect Love:

We love to talk about Him.

We love to talk to Him in prayer,
(Relationship, Transformation, and Dominion prayers).

We love to go to His house.

We love to think about Him.
He is always on our mind.

We love to study about Him.

We return His great love by ministering
to His needs (those of His children).

We put Him first in the resources He
has given us -- time, health (strength), wealth.

We extend His love, mercy and
forgiveness to reconcile fractured relationships.

Our Love for God

Love for God is the oil that greases the wheels of obedience. Obedience is not only saying “no” to satan and the world, but it is also saying “yes” to God’s will.

True love for God directs and energizes us to pursue God’s will. Without love, we will struggle with obedience to His will.

When Our Ardent, Agape Love for Christ Cools:

The Bible is neglected.

Praying only for self and not for others in need.

Church services are neglected or become routine.

Witnessing and soul winning ceases.

Other priorities and activities replace Him as number one in our life.

We fail to put Him first in the resources He has given to us -- time, health and wealth.

We do not readily forgive and reconcile with a brother who has offended us.

God Is a Jealous Lover

This intimate love relationship between God and man is depicted as a bride and groom relationship. The heavenly Bridegroom is wooing His Bride, wanting to destroy all the other lovers in her life. He demands to be first in our lives. Everything in our lives must pale in comparison to our love for Him.

What do we love? What are the loves in our life? What are the priorities in our life? How do we manage the resources (time, health and wealth) that God has given to us?

Ex. 20:5, Deut. 5:9

*Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a **jealous** God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;*

Ex. 34:14

*For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is **Jealous**, is a **jealous** God:*

Deut. 4:24

*For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a **jealous** God.*

Deut. 6:14-15

14 Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you;

*15 (For the Lord thy God is a **jealous** God among you) lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth.*

Bountiful Blessings Promised for Those Who Love God

Countless blessings are promised by God to those who love Him -- promises in this life and in the life to come. These are conditional blessings. Blessings that God says: "If you will - - then I will."

Deut. 6:5-7, 10-12

5 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

*10 And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to **give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not,***

*11 And **houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not;** when thou shalt have eaten and be full;*

12 Then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

Deut. 7:9

*Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which **keepeth covenant and mercy** with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;*

PERFECT LOVE -- THE HIGHEST LAW AND STRONGEST FORCE

Deut. 11:1, 13-14

1 Therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway.

13 And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul,

*14 That I **will give you the rain of your land** in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest **gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.***

Deut. 30:20

*That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for **he is thy life, and the length of thy days**: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.*

Psalms 5:11

*But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou **defendest them**: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.*

Psalms 91:14-16

*14 For the Lord says, "Because he loves me, I will **rescue** him; I will **make him great** because he trusts in my name.*

*15 When he calls on me, I will **answer**; I will be with him in trouble and **rescue** him and **honor** him.*

*16 I will satisfy him with a **full life** and give him my **salvation**." TLB*

Psalms 97:10

*You who love the Lord, hate evil! He **protects** the lives of his*

Our Love for God

godly people and **rescues** them from the power of the wicked.

Prov. 8:17, 21, 36

17 I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.

*21 That I may cause those that love me to **inherit substance**; and I will **fill their treasures**.*

36 But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.

Isa. 56:6-7

6 As for the Gentiles, the outsiders who join the people of the Lord and serve him and love his name, who are his servants and don't desecrate the Sabbath, and have accepted his covenant and promises,

*7 I will bring them also to my holy mountain of Jerusalem and make them **full of joy** within my House of Prayer. I will **accept their sacrifices and offerings**, for my Temple shall be called 'A House of Prayer for All People'! TLB*

Rom. 8:28

*And we know that **all things work together** for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.*

1 Cor. 2:9

*But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the **things which God hath prepared** for them that love him.*

1 Cor. 8:3

*But if any man love God, the same is **known of him**.*

James 1:12

God blesses those who patiently endure testing and

*temptation. Afterward they will **receive the crown of life** that God has promised to those who love him. NLT*

James 2:5

*Listen to me, dear brothers: God has chosen poor people to be rich in faith, and the **Kingdom of Heaven is theirs**, for that is the gift God has promised to all those who love him. TLB*

Additional Scriptures: Ex. 20:6, Deut. 5:10, Deut. 30:6, 16, Neh. 1:5, Psalms 31:23, Psalms 116:1, Psalms 119:47-48, 127, 132, 159, 163, 165, 167, Psalms 145:20, Eph. 6:24.

Scriptures Commanding Us to Love God

Deut. 6:5

*And thou shalt **love** the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.*

Deut. 10:12

*And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to **love** him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,*

Josh. 22:5

*But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the Lord charged you, to **love** the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.*

Matt. 22:36-37

36 Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

Our Love for God

*37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt **love** the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

Mark 12:30, 33

*30 And thou shalt **love** the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.*

*33 And to **love** him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to **love** his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.*

John 14:15, 21, 23

*15 If ye **love** me, keep my commandments.*

*21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will **love** him, and will manifest myself to him.*

*23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man **love** me, he will keep my words: and my Father will **love** him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

1 Cor. 16:22

*If anyone does not **love** the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come! NKJV*

1 John 5:3

*For this is the **love** of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.*

Jude 21

*Keep yourselves in the **love** of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*

Additional Scriptures: Deut. 13:3, Josh. 23:11, Luke 10:27, 2 Cor. 2:8, Eph. 1:4.

The Last Voice of the Old Testament

Malachi, the last voice of the Old Testament, pronounced a blessing of eternal life on those who truly fear and love God and a curse of eternal death on those who don't.

Mal. 3:16-18, 4:1

*16 Then those who feared and loved the Lord spoke often of him to each other. And he had a **Book of Remembrance** drawn up in which he recorded the names of **those who feared him and loved to think about him.***

*17 “**They shall be mine,**” says the Lord Almighty, “**in that day when I make up my jewels.** And I will spare them as a man spares an obedient and dutiful son.”*

18 Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

4:1 For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

Mal. 3:16-18, 4:1

16 Then those who feared the Lord spoke with each other, and the Lord listened to what they said. In his presence, a scroll of remembrance was written to record the names of those who feared him and always thought about the honor of his name.

*17 “They will be my people,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. “On the day when I act in judgment, **they will be my own special treasure.** I will spare them as a father spares an obedient child.*

Our Love for God

18 Then you will again see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.”

4:1 The Lord of Heaven’s Armies says, “The day of judgment is coming, burning like a furnace. On that day the arrogant and the wicked will be burned up like straw. They will be consumed -- roots, branches, and all.” NLT

Some people are too mean and evil to love with our natural human love. But when the perfect love of Christ is working in us we can love those who hate and persecute us. This will bring the favor of the Father, because He is reaching for them (His lost children) with His perfect love flowing through us.

** * * * **

*Jesus Christ is the author and finisher of our faith.
His greatest desire is to complete the work of
perfect love that He has begun in us.*

13. *Love for Our Neighbor and Our Enemies*

Jesus, in His answer to the question, “*Who is my neighbor*”, related the parable of the Good Samaritan. Its message discloses the truth that anyone in need is our neighbor, and we should display God’s love to them with kind deeds.

- **Love in deed is love indeed**

The commandment of God under both the Old and New Covenants commands that we love our neighbors and our enemies -- treating well those who spitefully use and persecute us.

Loving Our Neighbor and Enemies - Old Testament

Ex. 23:4-5

4 If thou meet thine enemy’s ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again.

5 If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.

Lev. 19:18, 34

18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord.

34 But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

Deut. 10:19

Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Prov. 25:21-22

21 If your enemy is hungry, give him food! If he is thirsty, give him something to drink!

22 This will make him feel ashamed of himself, and God will reward you. TLB

King David's love for his enemy and his lament over his death

King David, the man after God's heart, spared the life of King Saul who was hunting him like an animal and trying to kill him.

1 Sam. 24:6-7, 17

6 And he said unto his men, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord.

7 So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way.

17 And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.

In the Second book of Samuel Chapter 17 we see King David's great love for an enemy, as he laments and weeps over the death of King Saul: *"And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son: The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.*

Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil. Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"

It is difficult to read this passage without shedding a tear. David's lament over his enemy's death gives us another insight as to why he was called, "The man after God's own heart."

- **If David could love his enemy, who for many years sought to take his life, surely we who live on this side of Calvary and have experienced the love of Jesus Christ, can extend love to those who treat us wrong.**

The Prophet Elisha shows love for the enemies of Israel

The Syrian army had come to battle against Israel. Elisha prayed and the Lord smote them with blindness. The King of Israel wanted to kill them, but the prophet of God commanded that the enemy should be treated to a great feast and sent away in peace: *“When the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, My father, shall I slay them? Shall I slay them? [Elisha] answered, You shall not slay them. Would you slay those you have taken captive with your sword and bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and return to their master.*

So [the king] prepared great provision for them, and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. And the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel” (2 Kings 6:21-23). AMP

This act of kindness to their enemy resulted in a peaceful relationship between Israel and their arch enemy for years to come. And we can claim that same benefit today when doing good deeds to someone who has treated us wrong.

Loving Our Neighbor and Enemies - New Testament

Matt. 5:44, 46

44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

Matt. 22:37-40

37 Jesus replied, Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind.

38 This is the first and greatest commandment.

39 The second most important is similar: Love your neighbor as much as you love yourself.

40 All the other commandments and all the demands of the prophets stem from these two laws and are fulfilled if you obey them. Keep only these and you will find that you are obeying all the others. TLB

Rom. 13:8-10

8 Owe nothing to anyone -- except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God's law.

9 For the commandments say, "You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet." These and other such commandments are summed up in this one commandment: Love your neighbor as yourself.

10 Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God's law. NLT

Additional Scriptures: Deut. 22:4, Prov. 24:17, Mark 12:30-31, Luke 6:27-29, 35, 1 Cor. 4:12-13, 16.

**Stephen, the first martyr prayed for his tormentors
as he was being brutally stoned to death**

Acts 7:59-60

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord,

lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Apostle Paul admonishes: “Bless those who curse you”

Rom. 12:14, 16-19, 21

14 Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them.

16 Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!

17 Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable.

18 Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

19 Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, “I will take revenge; I will pay them back,” says the Lord.

21 Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.
NLT

Apostle Peter says we may suffer for doing good

1 Peter 3:8, 10-12, 17

8 Be agreeable, be sympathetic, be loving, be compassionate, be humble.

*10 Whoever wants to embrace life and see the day fill up with good, Here's what you do: **Say nothing evil or hurtful;***

11 Snub evil and cultivate good; run after peace for all you're worth.

12 God looks on all this with approval, listening and responding well to what he's asked; But he turns his back on those who do evil things.

*17 It's better to **suffer for doing good**, if that's what God wants, than to be punished for doing bad. MSG*

Jesus, in His dying moments prayed for His tormentors

Luke 23:33-34

33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

*34 Then said Jesus, **Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.** And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.*

1 Peter 2:22-23

22 He was guilty of no sin, neither was deceit (guile) ever found on His lips [Isa. 53:9].

23 When He was reviled and insulted, He did not revile or offer insult in return; [when] He was abused and suffered, He made no threats [of vengeance]. AMP

- **Some people are too mean and evil to love with our natural human love. But when the perfect love of Christ is working in us, we can love those who hate and persecute us. This will bring the favor of the Father, because He is reaching for them (His lost children) with His perfect love flowing through us.**
- **Jesus Christ is the author and finisher of our faith. His greatest desire is to complete the work of perfect love that He has begun in us.**

II.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Charts

Only a portion of the related charts are included here since the Addendum Volume contains the full size 8.5 x 11 copies of the PowerPoint charts for Volumes I, II, III, IV, V and VI. This is published as a separate volume since:

- Many of these charts become less useful (distorted and hard to read) when they are reduced to a book size.
- Many charts are applicable to multiple volumes.
- Charts can be revised and distributed without reprinting volumes that refer to them.

The full color charts are also available in PowerPoint and Adobe Acrobat formats.

Refer to the following pages for these charts:

A-2 God and Man Relationship Model

A-12 Relationship Model - A Continuous Cycle of Growth
(God's perfect love is at the center of this relationship)

B-1a Dominion in the Supernatural -- continuous cycle
(Our love for God and others is the foundation of dominion)

C-15 Charity -- the Bridge to Supernatural Growth

C-19 Love -- Man's Kingdom Vs. God's Kingdom

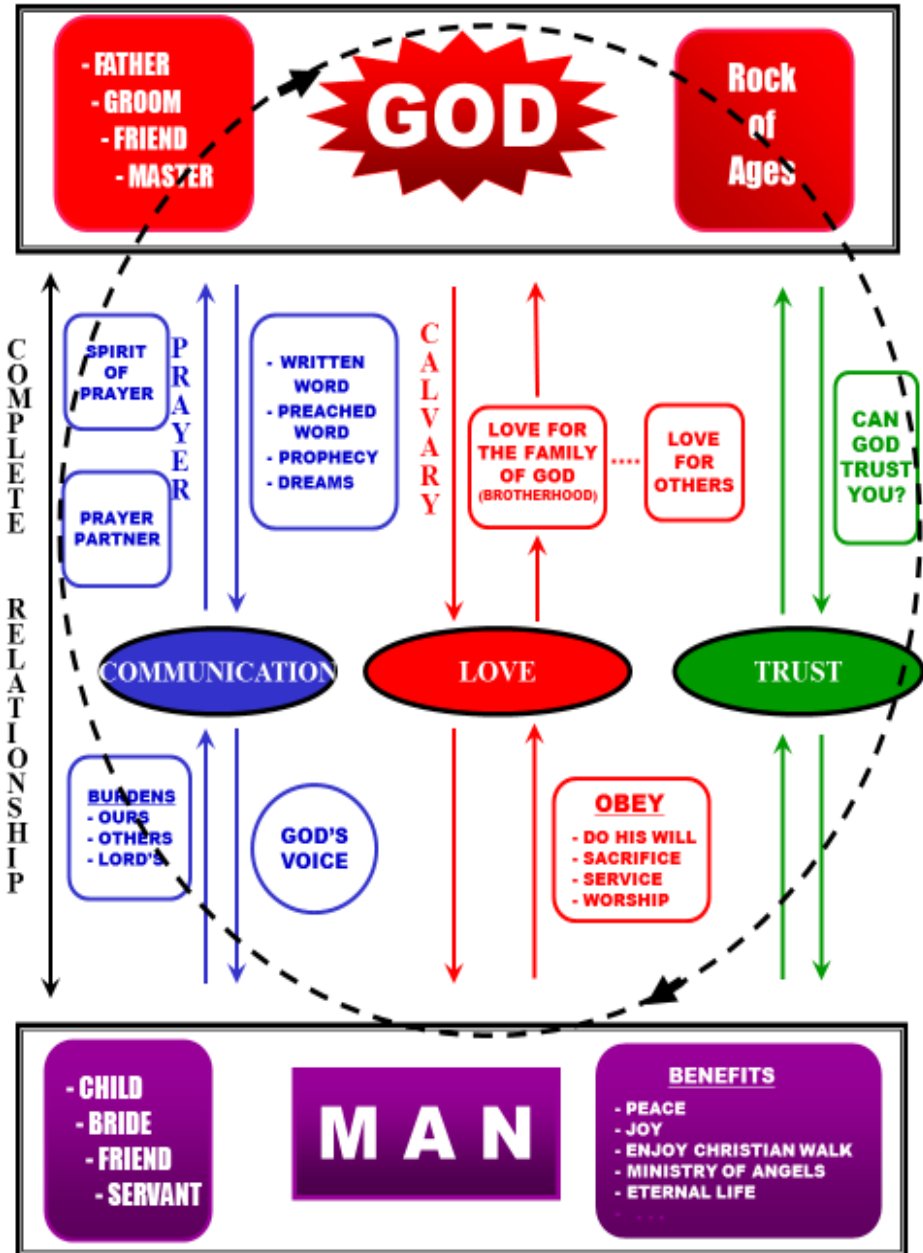
D-5 The Body / Soul / Spirit Model

(God's love should permeate our emotions replacing our limited human love with His perfect love)

APPENDICES

- D-5a Transformation of the Saint Continues With Victory Over Self -- the Soul: Will, Mind, Emotions (Love)
- E-2 Relationship Prayers, Transformation Prayers and Dominion Prayers
- F-3 The Path to the Supernatural -- He Must Increase, but I Must Decrease
- G-8 The Gifts of the Spirit Flow Through the Charity Channel
- G-22 Love is the Bridge Over Which Truth is Transported
- G-23 Ministering to Natural and Spiritual Needs
- G-23a The Final Test at Judgment
- G-26 Love Involves Compassion and Care (Action)
- G-27 Loving God is Loving People
- N-1 Physical and Spiritual Life Cycle
- N-2 The Ecosystem of God's Kingdom
- N-3 God's Perfect Love (woven into the three major themes of the Bible - Relationship, Transformation, and Dominion)
- N-4 Perfect Love is the Foundation for Humility and Unity
- N-5 Our Love to God is Measured by Our Love to Our Brother
- N-6 God's Love is Perfected in Us as We Love Our Brother
- N-7 Special Love to Those in the Household of Faith
- N-9 Relationship With God and Your Brother

Chart A-2



DOUBLE VISION MINISTRIES: Rev. James Twentier

APPENDICES

Chart A-12

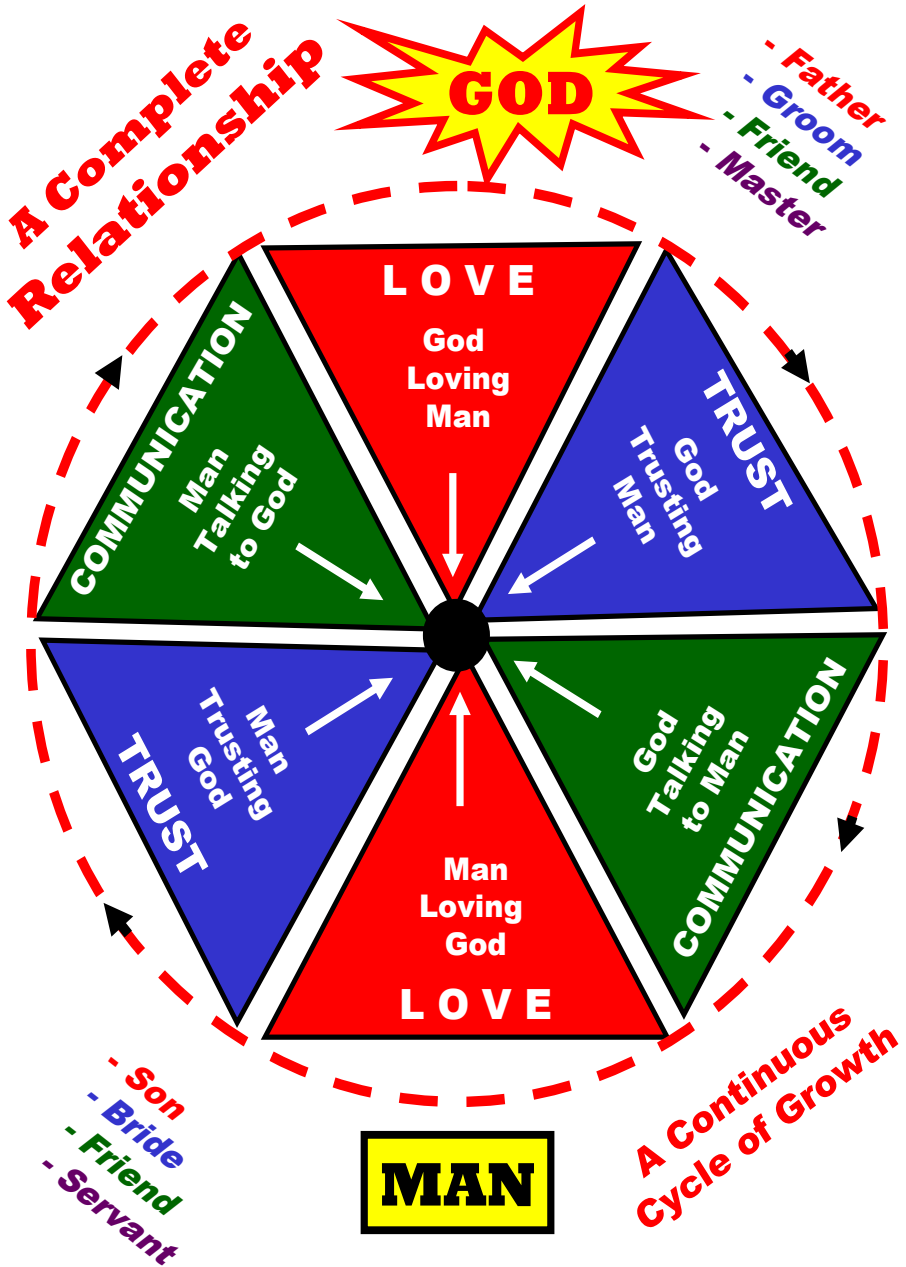
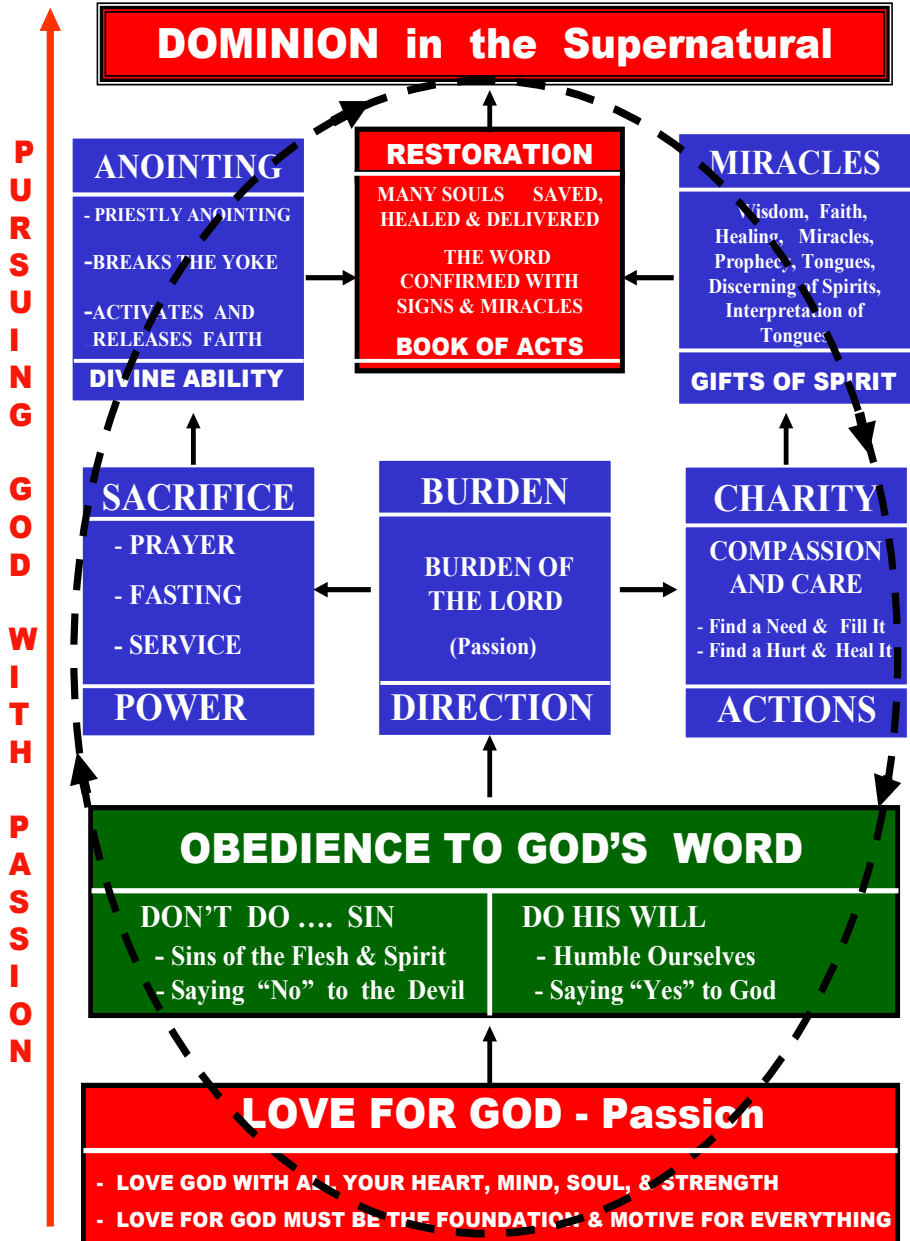


Chart B-1a



APPENDICES

Chart C-15

**Our Motive for Spiritual Growth Must be to fulfill God's Purpose
-- Ministering to People's Needs -- Driven by Charity**

1 Cor 13

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not **charity**, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not **charity**, I am nothing. 3-13 **charity** ... **charity** **charity** **charity** **charity**

RELIGIOUS:

Faithful to:

- House of God
- Word of God
- Prayer
- Fasting
- Tithes & Offerings

Luke 18:11-12

11 The Pharisee stood and **prayed** thus with himself,

12 I **fast** twice in the week, I give **tithes** of all that I possess.

Delivered from Egypt (world), but living in the routine of the wilderness brings spiritual stagnation.

Vs.

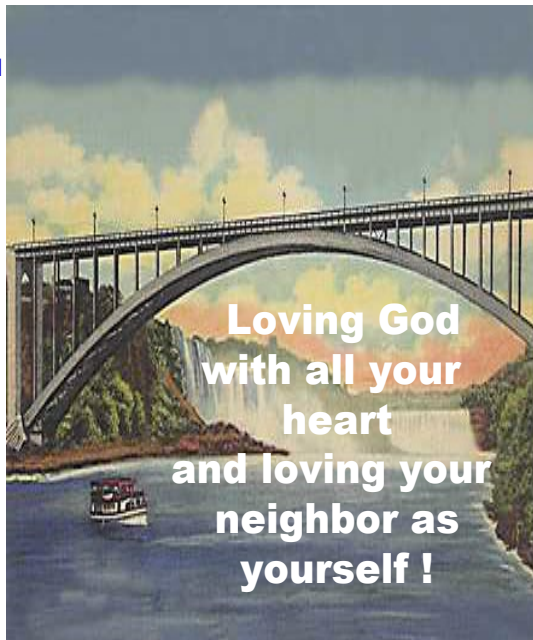
SPIRITUAL:

Love for:

- The God of the house
- The God of the Word
- God's lost children in need

Your true **love** for God is measured by your **love** to your brother – anyone in need.

Living in Canaan, partnering with God in the supernatural brings spiritual growth !



Gal 5:14 For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." NLT

James 2:8 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. 9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ESV

Matt 25:37-40 The final test at the judgment. The only way to love God is to minister to someone in need. 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, . . . thirsty . . . stranger . . . naked . . . sick . . . in prison?

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Chart C-19

LOVE FOR MY KINGDOM Vs. LOVE FOR GOD'S KINGDOM

Balance in My God-given Resources of Time, Health and Wealth

Son of Man (Kingdom of Man -Temporal) The natural man (body and soul)	Son of God (Kingdom of God - Eternal) The spiritual man (spirit)
Love for things in my kingdom	Love for things in His Kingdom (must be more)
<p>Love for family, friends and neighbors is good and right --</p> <p>But, my love for God must be much greater.</p>	<p>Luke 14:26 Anyone who wants to be my follower must love me far more than he does his own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, or sisters--yes, more than his own life--otherwise he cannot be my disciple. TLB</p> <p>When I love God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength, I will have no problem with obedience to His will and loving my enemies and those that mistreat me.</p>
- Less love for my kingdom.	<p>Spiritual growth begins and ends with love:</p> <p>- More love for His Kingdom.</p>
<p>Spiritual decline and eventual death begins and ends with love:</p> <p>- More love for my kingdom.</p>	- Less love for His Kingdom.
<p>What we love, we will pursue. What we pursue we will become (addicted to) and it will consume our <u>spare</u> time -- for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Job and career - Hobbies - Sports - Entertainment 	<p>Develop a love for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prayer (Spirit) - The House of God - The Word of God (the truth) <p>Ps 84:10 A single day spent in your temple is better than a thousand anywhere else.</p>
<p>Balancing and properly using the resources God has given me (vs. robbing God of His part).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time resources - Health (energy resources) spent in my kingdom - Wealth (\$\$ resources) <p>"The love of money is the root of all evil."</p>	<p>Love to give tithes and offerings of my:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time (time given to His Kingdom) - Health (energy) - working in His kingdom -- ministering to needs - Wealth (offerings to the church and the poor)
<p>As born-again Christians, we are not having problems with sin, but self -- our soul which is our will, our mind, and our emotions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self will - Self (carnal) thinking - Self love 	<p>Rom 8:14 Those who are led by God's Spirit are God's children. GNT</p> <p>Our greatest daily challenge is to allow the Spirit to lead and direct our lives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - God's will - God's thoughts and ways - God's love and compassion
<p>Spiritual Growth = less of self</p> <p>I must decrease!</p>	<p>Spiritual Growth = more of the Spirit</p> <p>He must increase!</p>

APPENDICES

Chart D-5

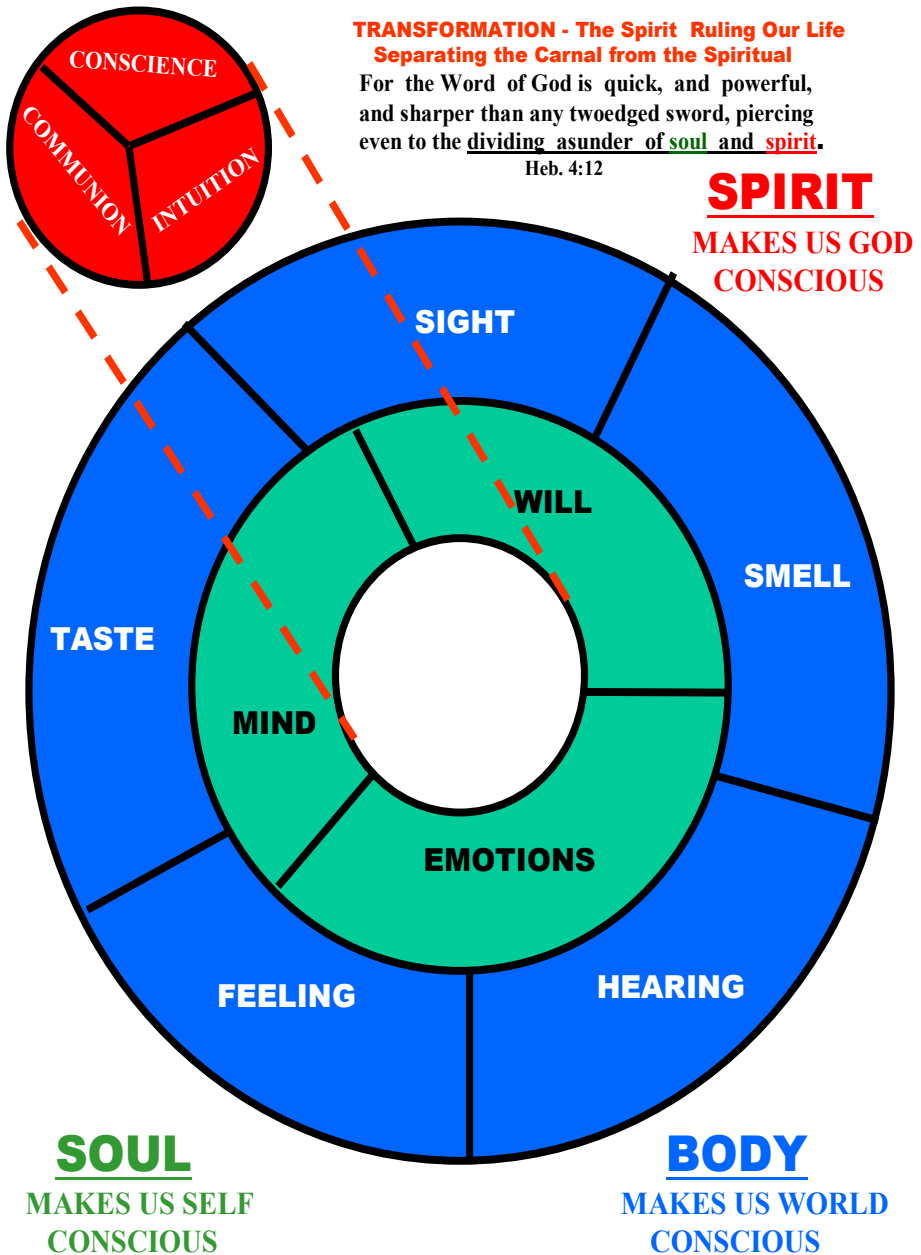
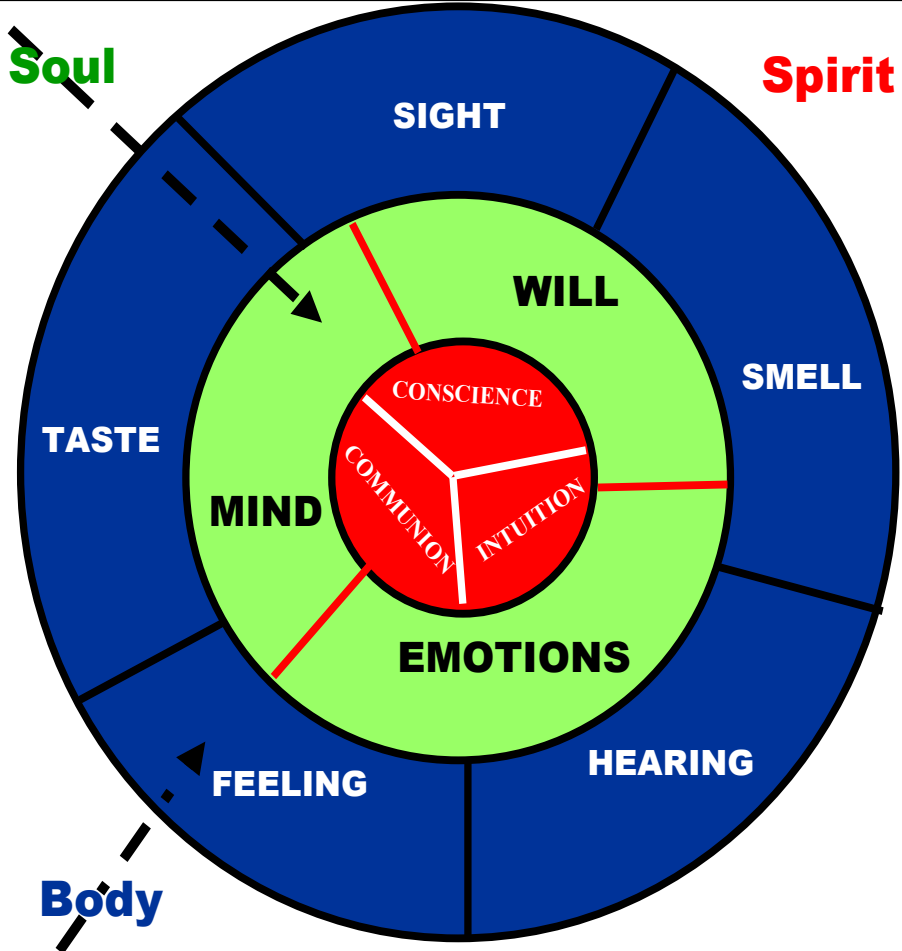


Chart D-5a

**Transformation of a Saint Continues With
Victory Over the Soul (Will, Mind & Emotions):
Less of My Will, Mind and Emotions (Love) and More of God's.**

Be ye transformed by the renewing of your **mind**, that ye may
prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect **will** of God. Rom. 12:2



**Transformation of a Sinner Begins With
Repentance and Victory Over Sins of the Flesh**

APPENDICES

Chart E-2

1. Relationship Prayers

(The focus is talking to God and listening for His still small Voice))

Thanksgiving: Thanking God for what He has done -
(spiritual, relationship, physical blessings)

Praise & Worship: Confessing who God is -
(His greatness: Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace)

Supplication: Request for my needs to be supplied

2. Transformation Prayers

(The focus of need is for me to be transformed -- changed)

Confession: Repentance of sin and self

Transformation: Change me prayers

- Less of my will and more of His
- Less of my thoughts and ways and more of His
- Less of my limited human love and more of His perfect love
- Ask God to help me identify and remove hindrances to the flow of His love and power through my life

3. Dominion Prayers

(The focus of need is for others)

Intercessory Prayers: Standing between God and man,
interceding for our lost neighbor, city and world

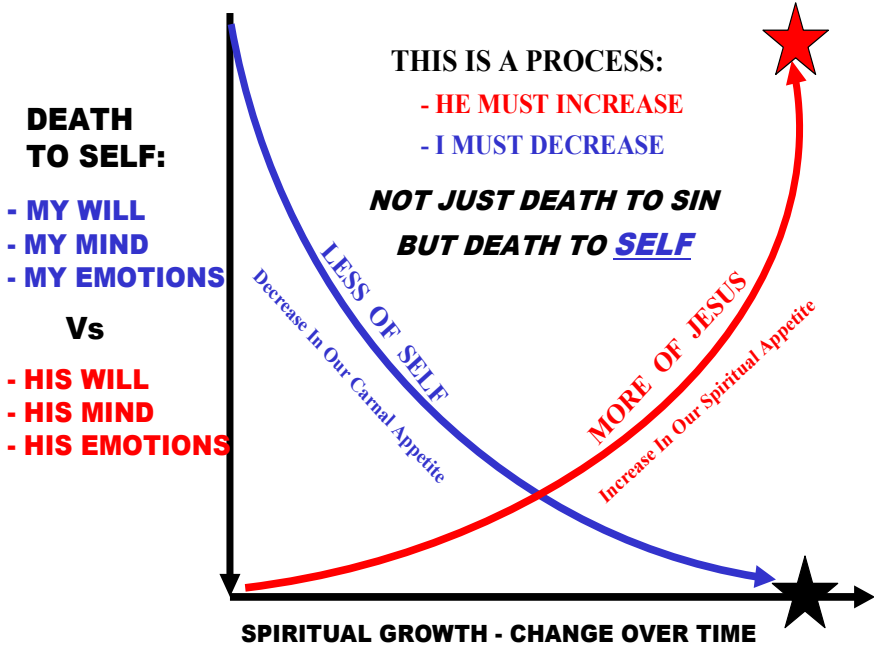
Intercessory Prayers (Spiritual Warfare): Standing between
Satan and man (binding the powers of Satan that have bound and
blinded them)

**Praying for God to help us walk in the dominion and
authority we have been given as a son of God**

Chart F-3

THE PATH TO THE SUPERNATURAL FOR THE BORN-AGAIN BELIEVER

**THE MIRACLE MINISTRY OF JESUS WILL FLOW THROUGH
US UNRESTRICTED - WHEN SELF HAS COMPLETELY DIED**



IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: (Why did John the Baptist have to die?)

John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus' miracle ministry. His message of "He must increase, but I must decrease", was a self-fulfilled prophecy when he was imprisoned, and put to death as the miracle ministry of Jesus began.

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: (Why did Jonathan have to die?)

Saul is a type of the flesh, Jonathan is a type of the soul (self - the will, the mind, and the emotions), David is a type of the Spirit. Both Saul and Jonathan had to die before David could come to the throne.

APPENDICES

Chart G-8

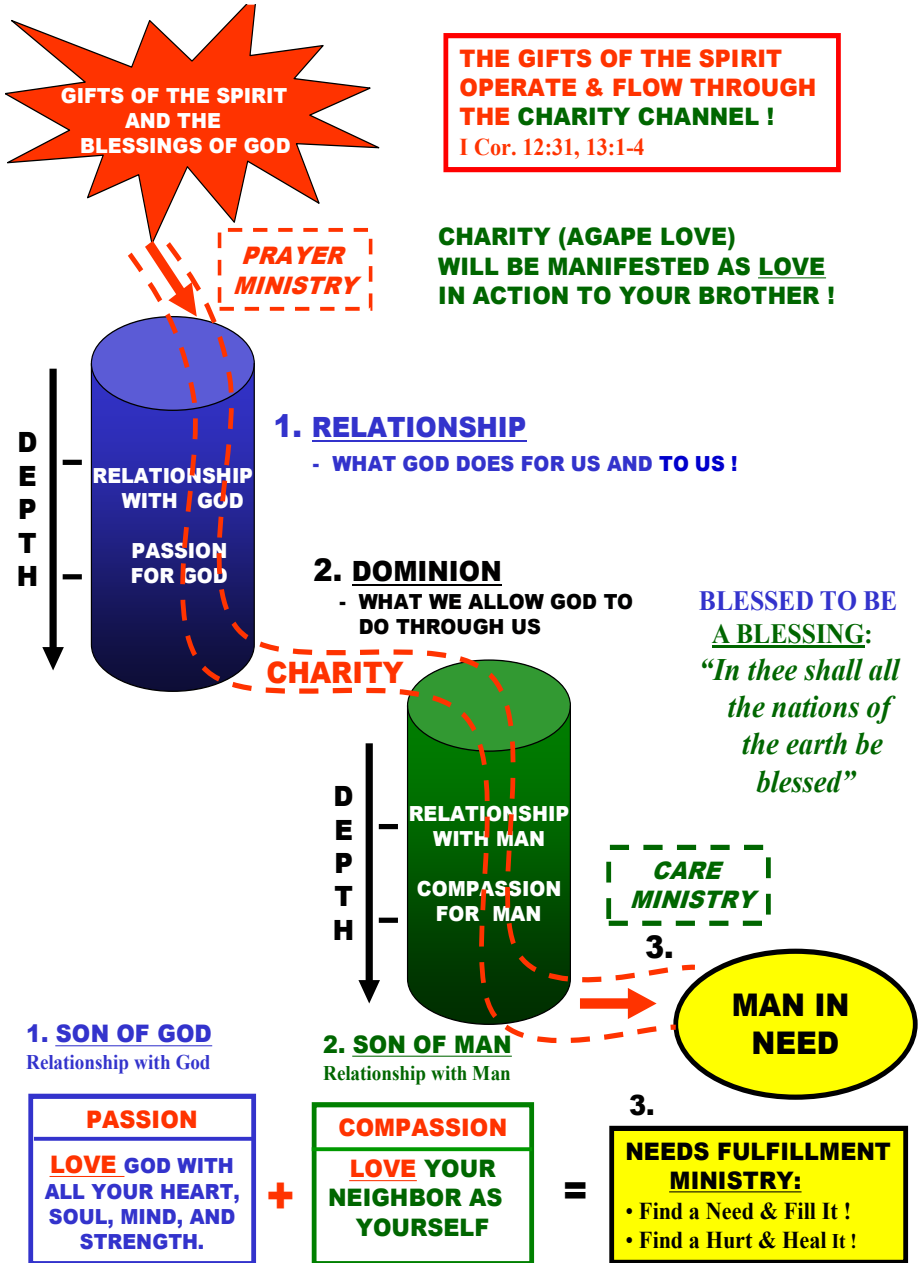


Chart G-22

LOVE

Is the bridge over which truth is transported!

John 3:16 For **God so loved** the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Luke 10:27 Thou shalt **love the Lord thy God** with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and **thy neighbour as thyself**.

GOD'S SUPPLY:

- **Truth**
 - > Doctrine
 - **Spirit**
 - > Gift of the Holy Ghost
 - > Gifts of the Spirit
 - Wisdom
 - Knowledge
 - Faith
 - Healing
 - Miracles
 - Prophecy
 - Discerning of Spirits
 - Tongues
 - Interpretation of Tongues
- (1 Cor. 12:7-11)



MAN'S NEED:

- **Salvation**
- **Healing**
- **Deliverance**

GOD

>>>>> God uses man to flow His love and compassion to those in need >>>>>

MAN

2 Cor. 5:18 God hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation

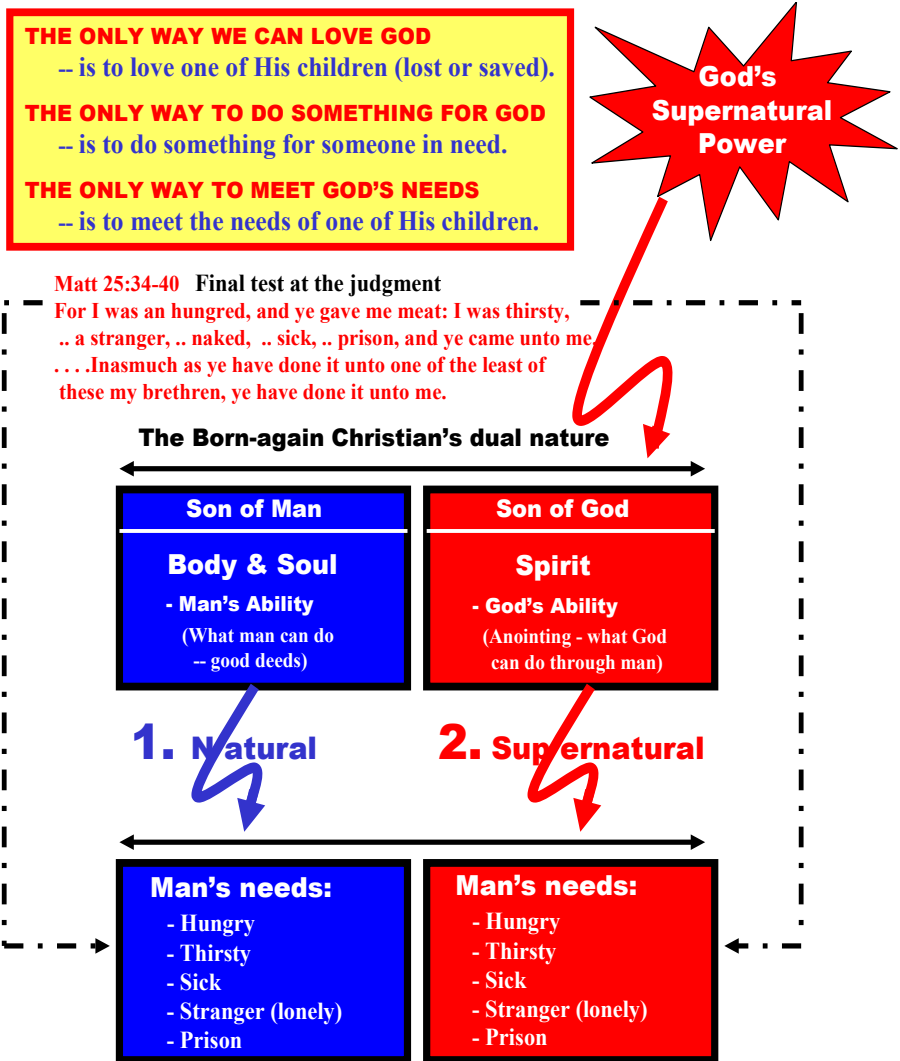
Power is safe only in the hands of love!

The gifts of the Spirit flow through the **charity (love) channel:**

1 Cor. 13:2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and **have not charity**, I am **nothing**.
3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and **have not charity**, it profiteth me **nothing**.

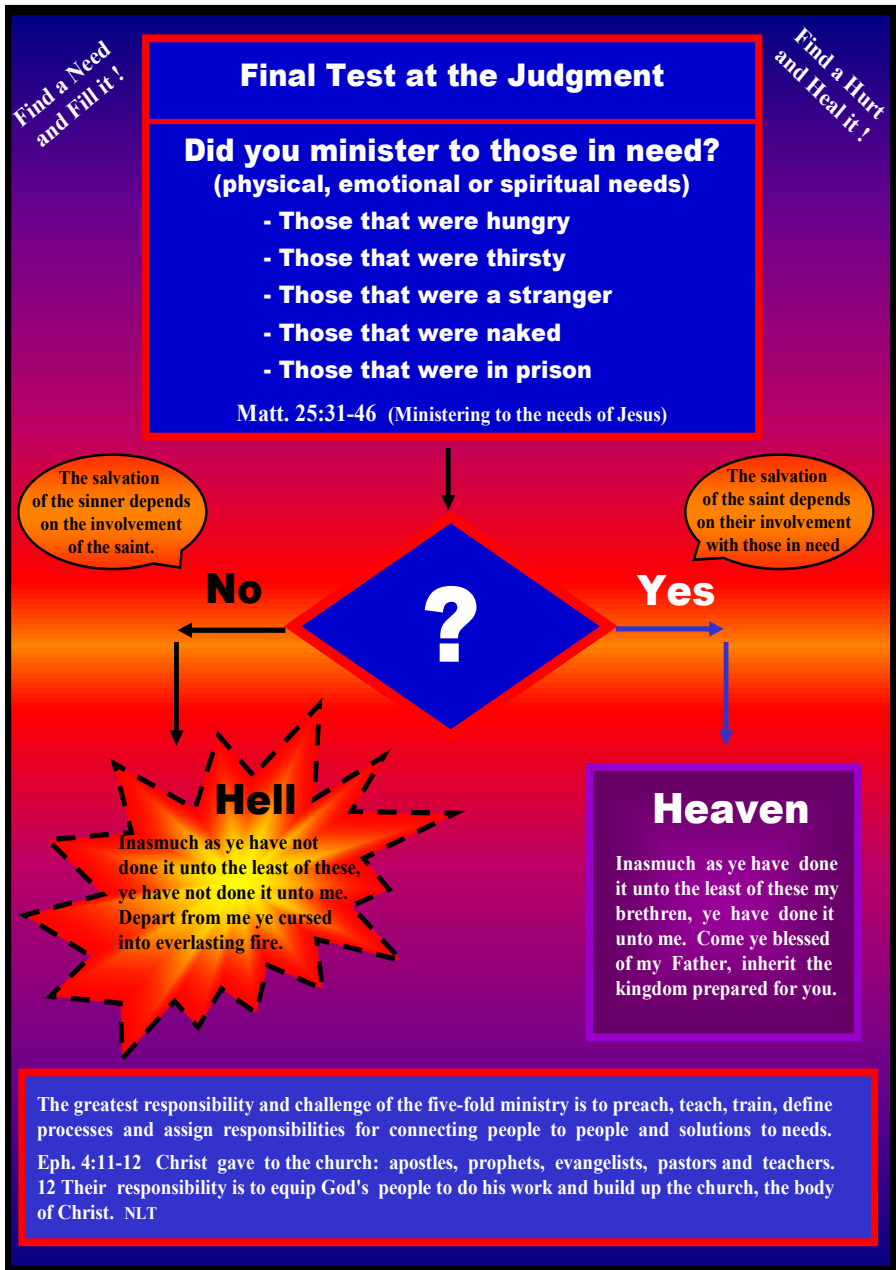
APPENDICES

Chart G-23



- (1) Building a relationship with someone in need by doing kind deeds, as a **son of man**. These good deeds (what we can do) begin to open up the channel of God's love and compassion in our lives for the second step.
- (2) God's supernatural power -- what God can do through us, as a **son of God**, to minister to their needs.

Chart G-23a



APPENDICES

Chart G-26

L O V E

Intense deep devotion for someone or something.

Love in its purest form would drive someone to give their life for a cause or a person.

Love is inconveniencing yourself for someone's benefit.

Love will drive you to sacrifice your time, energy and finances for someone in need.

**LOVE WILL ALWAYS HAVE TWO COMPONENTS:
"COMPASSION & CARE"**

Compassion is the Emotion -

It is the deep sorrow and sympathy for the suffering or trouble of others accompanied by a strong urge to help.

Care is the Action -

It means to provide for or protect against trouble and want. It is feeling a great responsibility and concern for the welfare of someone to the extent that action will be taken to do something to affect their welfare and comfort.

Jesus came to earth to:

- See and Feel (Compassion)**
- Touch and Heal (Care)**

Chart G-27

HOW TO LOVE GOD MORE

Growing In Our Love For God

LOVING GOD IS LOVING PEOPLE

1 John 4:20

**He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen,
how can he love God whom he hath not seen?**

Gal 5:14

**For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou
shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.**

Matt 25:37-40 The final test at the judgment.

**37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord,
when saw we thee an hungred, . . . thirsty . . . stranger
. . . naked . . . sick . . . in prison?**

**40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily
I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of
the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.**

THE ROYAL LAW

James 2:8-9

**If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture,
thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do
well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin.**

APPENDICES

Chart N-1

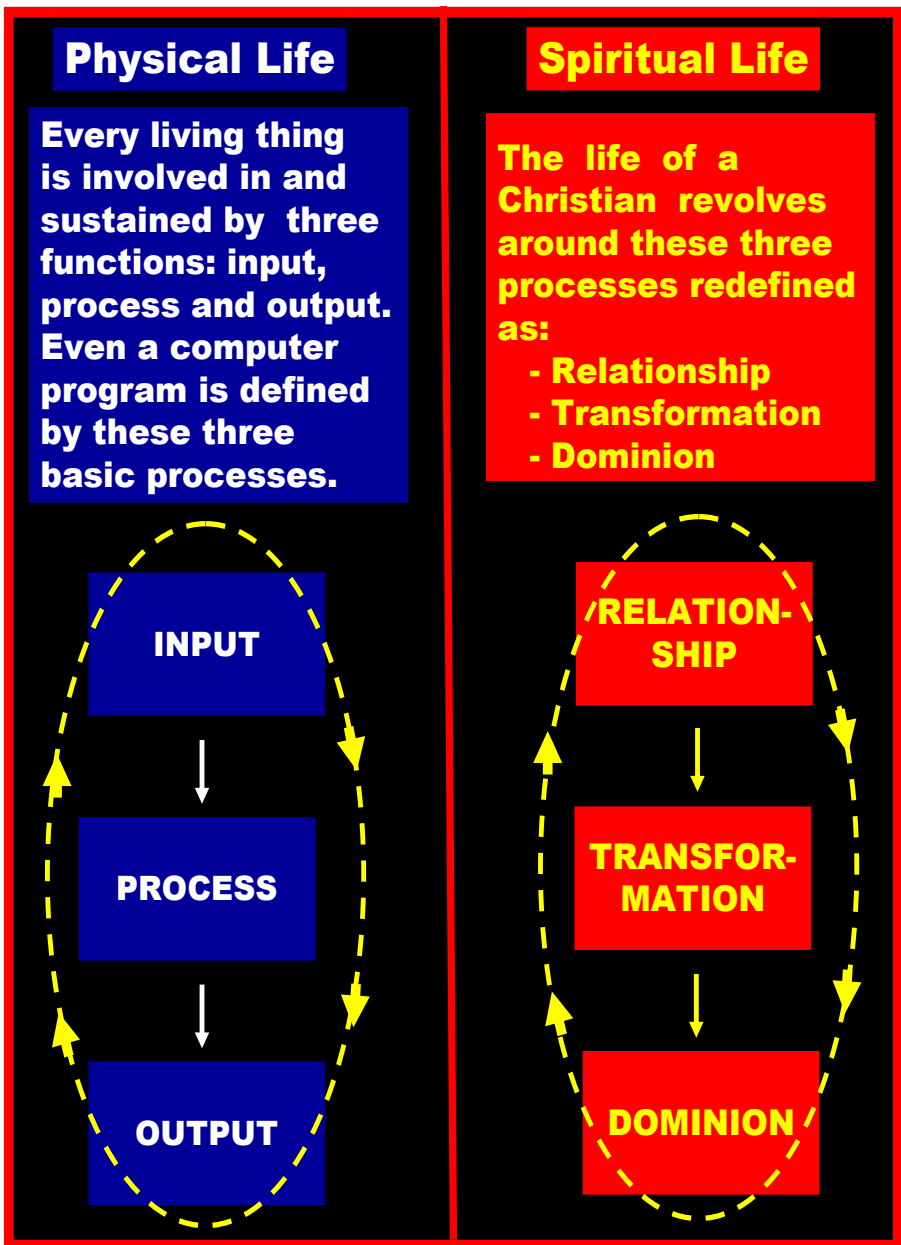
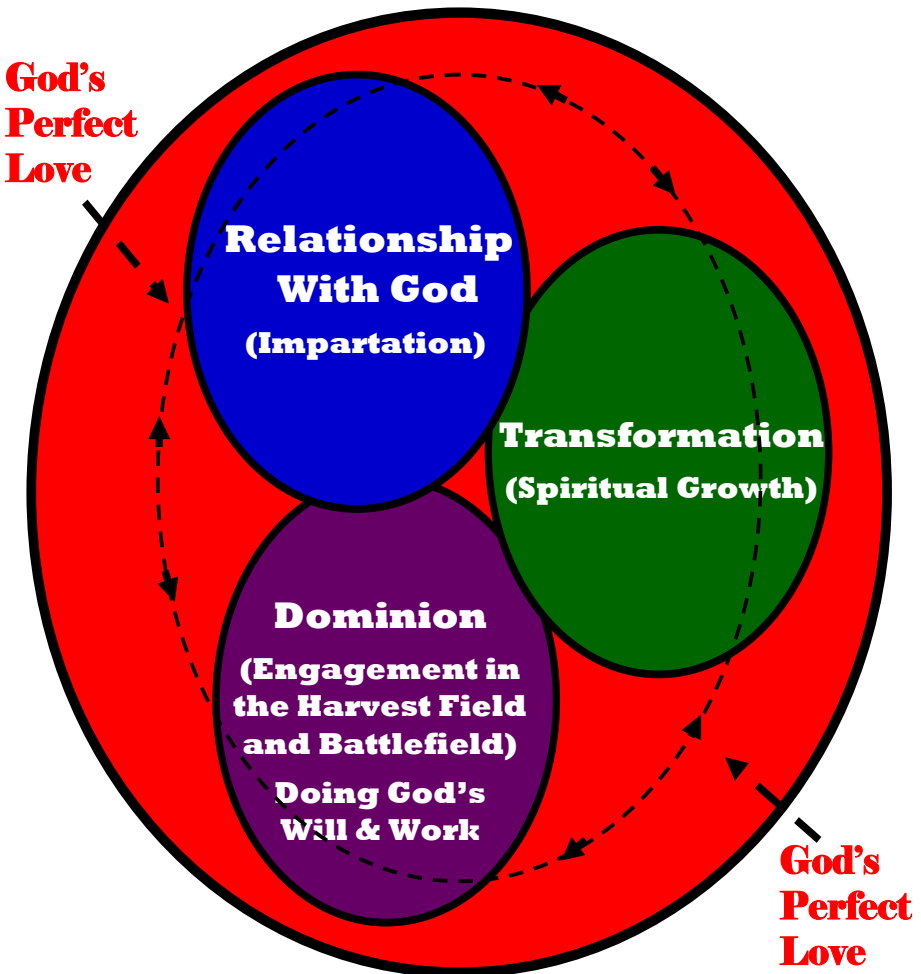


Chart N-2

The Ecosystem of God's Kingdom

Just as oxygen is the key element in our natural ecosystem for us to live, God's **PERFECT LOVE** is the key element in God's ecosystem for the spiritual man to survive and thrive. It is the key element and driving force in a growing relationship with God, transformation of the inner man and dominion in the harvest field.



God is love – in Him (His love) we live and move and have our being.

APPENDICES

Chart N-3

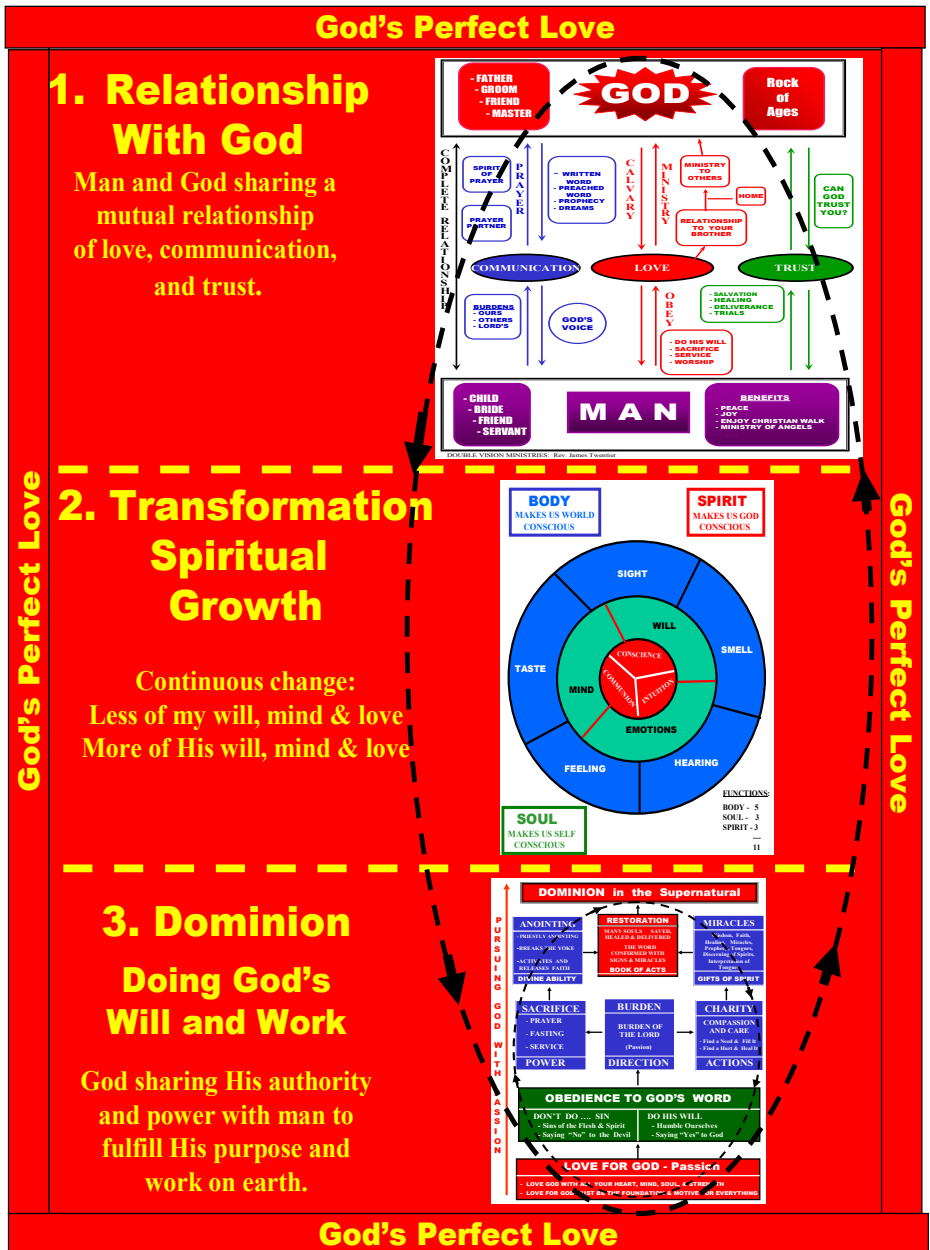


Chart N-4



APPENDICES

Chart N-5

Our Love to God is Measured by Our Love to Our Brother



Our love to God is manifest and measured by our love to the brotherhood.

When love **FIRST flows within the family of God, the brotherhood, it is then most effective in ministering to the needs of our lost world !**

Christ puts us together in one piece, whose very breath and blood flow through us.

He is the Head and we are the body. (Col. 2:19) MSG

There should be no division or discord or lack of adaptation [of the parts of the body to each other]. (1 Cor. 12:25) AMP

Do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. (Gal. 6:10)

I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. (Rev. 2:4)

Chart N-6

God's Love is Perfected in Us as We Love Our Brother

John, the beloved, declares that the love of God is perfected in us only as we love our brother. He further states that the real proof of our love for God (an invisible being) is to love that which visibly represents Him (the brotherhood).

1 John 4:12

12 No man hath seen God at any time. **If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us.**

12 No man has at any time seen God. **But if we love one another, God abides (lives and remains) in us and His love (that love which is essentially His) is brought to completion (to its full maturity, runs its full course, is perfected) in us! AMP**

12 No one has seen God, ever. **But if we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and his love becomes complete in us -- perfect love! MSG**

1 John 4:20,-21

20 If anyone says, I love God, and hates (detests) his brother [in Christ], he is a liar; for **he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, Whom he has not seen.**

21 And this command (charge, order, injunction) we have from Him: that he who loves God shall love his brother [believer] also. AMP

APPENDICES

Chart N-7

Special Love to Our Brothers and Sisters in the Church

Galatians 6:10

- 10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.
- 10 Be mindful to be a blessing, especially to those of the household of faith [those who belong to God's family with you, the believers]. AMP

1 John 3:13, 14, 16

- 13 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.
- 14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.
- 16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

1 Peter 2:17

- 17 Show respect for all men [treat them honorably]. Love the brotherhood (the Christian family of which Christ is the Head). Reverence God. Honor the emperor. AMP
- 17 Treat everyone you meet with dignity. Love your spiritual family. Revere God. Respect the government. MSG

John 13:35

- 35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.
- 35 By this shall all [men] know that you are My disciples, if you love one another [if you keep on showing love among yourselves]. AMP

**Jesus did not say the world would recognize that
we are his disciples because we love Him,
but because we love each other!**

Chart N-9

THERE IS A CLEAR MESSAGE IN GOD'S WORD REGARDING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR BROTHER:

- **God Loves His Lost Children as Much as His Saved Children and Demands We Do the Same, Because He Is Reaching to Save Them!**
- **When Your Relationship With Your Brother Is Not Right -- Your Relationship With God Is Not Right!**

**When you do something good to someone,
your heavenly Father takes it as done unto Himself !**
Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my
brethren, ye have done it unto me. Matthew 25:40

**When you neglect to do something good to someone,
or do something evil, our heavenly Father takes it as
done unto Himself !**

Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these ,
ye did it not to me. Matthew 25:45

He who oppresses the poor, reproaches, mocks, and insults
his Maker, but he who is kind and merciful to the needy
honors Him. AMP Proverbs 14:31

**Just as a natural father is protective of his children, our heavenly
Father is protective of His children -- and much more because His
love is much greater than human love.**

Appendix 2

Additional Books from the Author

Refer to the following pages for a brief description of the progressive book series “**I Must Be About My Father’s Business.**” These eight volumes are shown here to:

- Briefly describe the complete scope of this project.
- Define the purpose and scope of each volume and where each one fits in this progressive series.

Volume I

God's Purpose for Man

Relationship and Dominion

Volume I sets forth God’s purpose for man -- relationship and dominion. It addresses in more depth man’s **relationship** with God and God’s desire to have a close and growing relationship with man.

This book discusses man sharing a mutual relationship of love, communication, and trust with God -- as a son of God, a friend of God, a servant of God and as the Bride of Christ. It also describes the God and man relationship roles: Father / Child, Groom / Bride, Friend / Friend, Master / Servant (love slave). It emphasizes God’s **love** for man and man’s love for God by loving his fellow man.

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Volume II

Dominion

Doing God's Will and Work

This volume emphasizes the importance of **dominion**, since we often lead people to a relationship with God, but sometimes fail to help them take the next important step -- exercising dominion in the Kingdom of God. Dominion involves God sharing His authority and power with man in a partnership to fulfill His purpose and work on earth. The two concepts of relationship and dominion working together in a believer's life will bring balance, spiritual growth and fulfillment.

Love for God is the foundation for obedience which includes not just saying "no" to satan and sin, but "yes" to God's perfect will for our lives.

This book addresses the subject of dominion and why we need to be involved in the mission and work of the Father's business. It includes many examples from both the Old and New Testaments of God's plan to work through man to accomplish His will on earth. It also describes God and man dominion roles: Great Physician / physician; Great High Priest / priest; Great Commander / soldier; King of Kings / prince; Lord of the Harvest / harvester.

Volume III

Transformation

• Dominion Over Sin and Self

This book addresses **what** actions are required to become more effective in the Father's business. This encompasses foundational principles of spiritual growth that will prepare individuals to be more fruitful Christians. The primary emphasis is transformation: dominion over self (the will, the mind and the emotions) vs. dominion over sin.

Transformation is a continuous process of: less of my will and more of His, less of my thoughts and more of His, less of my limited human love and more of **God's perfect love**.

Spiritual growth results from a hunger and a passion for the things of God -- "Loving God with all of our heart, soul and mind." The will of God will always lead us to greater spiritual growth.

Spiritual growth at the individual level will result in church growth at the corporate level.

Volume IV

Unlimited Partnership

With a Supernatural God

The greatest reason for God's creation of man was that He might obtain sons to carry out His will and work on earth. He desired to reproduce His image in a creature.

The greatest reason for God's new creation of man (through a new birth, a spiritual birth) first recorded in the book of Acts,

APPENDICES

was that He might obtain **sons to carry out the supernatural work of His Kingdom**. True son-ship is an obligation to live out, or put in practice, the Father's nature. It is the Father's will for us as sons of God, to become, "*Partakers of His divine nature*", His supernatural nature -- partnering with Him in His business.

As a partaker of the Father's divine nature we must grow in our **love** for God which will be manifested by our **love** and loving actions for man.

Volume V

Revival and Evangelism

- **Passion for God**
- **Compassion for the Lost**

The key to soul winning is **love** and compassion while exercising **dominion** in the harvest field.

This book describes some of the biblical foundational principles of revival and evangelism. Discussed in more detail is the "**how to**" of putting the evangelism principles into practice through the two arms of the church:

- The **Prayer Ministry** -- reaching for Him.
- The **Compassion and Care Ministry** (attracting, winning and retaining) -- reaching for them with God's **perfect love**.

Volume VI

Perfect Love

The Highest Law and Strongest Force

If we had only one word to describe God, it would be **“l-o-v-e.”** If we had only one word to describe the entire Bible, it would be **“l-o-v-e”** -- a love story of God’s love for mankind, a love letter to mankind.

- Love is the only motive accepted by God for working in His Kingdom . *“Though I have all spiritual gifts . . . give all my goods to the poor . . . give my body to be burned, and have not love, it is nothing” (1 Cor. 13:1-3).*

- It is the foundation and driving force for everything that is meaningful and lasting in the Kingdom of God. It is the currency of God’s Kingdom.

- It is the key element required to produce revival and evangelism with miracles, signs, and church growth like the first century Church in the book of Acts that shook their known world.

In this study we will discuss some hindrances that obstruct the growth and flow of God’s love in our lives. We will also discuss some of the principles that promote and increase the growth of God’s love in our lives.

Some of the amazing benefits and results of the **perfect love** of God flowing and working in our lives include: humility, unity, forgiveness, reconciliation of relationships, intensified revival and evangelism, love for our neighbor and enemy and especially the brotherhood (the body of Christ).

APPENDICES

Loving God and loving our brother are completely and indivisibly linked, because we are members of one body. Our love for God (the invisible) is manifest by our love for our brother (the visible): *“He who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen” (1 John 4:20).*

Volume VII **Addendum Volume** **PowerPoint Charts for all Volumes**

The Addendum Volume contains the 8.5 X 11 copies of the PowerPoint charts supporting the themes and concepts presented in Volumes I, II, III, IV, V and VI of the series entitled, *“I Must Be About My Father’s Business.”*

The purpose of these charts is to, the extent possibly, provide a graphic image of a concept as a strawman to initiate and facilitate understanding and discussion of biblical concepts.

The full color charts are available on CD in Adobe Acrobat and PowerPoint formats. For group teaching, these can be printed on printer transparencies for presentation on an overhead projector or with a computer and multi-media projector.

Deeper Life Spiritual Growth Cycle

Becoming a Book of Acts Christian

This book includes fifteen lessons which provide a teaching tool for the key foundational principles included in the other books in this series. I use this as the curriculum and text book for teaching in foreign mission Bible schools and other settings.

The primary purpose and scope of the lesson series in this book is directed and driven by the greatest need and challenge for the born-again believer in these momentous days of the endtime. And that is to attain the spiritual maturity required to operate in the apostolic power, dominion and authority demonstrated in the book of Acts. Only this course of action will combat and overcome the evil and vicious spirit of the Antichrist rapidly rising in the world today and empower us to effectively reap the end-time harvest.

The seemingly impossible task to reach the lost of this godless, hopeless generation, with time running out, sets the stage for God to do a new thing -- a supernatural thing.

Our great omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God is calling every born-again believer to partner with Him at the supernatural level as a son of God -- fighting in His battle and working in His harvest with dominion and authority over satan and sickness:

The key spiritual growth cycle concepts discussed in this book include: Relationship, Transformation and Dominion, all working in the love of God.

Appendix 3 - Notes

Section I

Chapter 1

- (1) Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003 Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.
- (2) The Bible Exposition Commentary. Copyright © 1989 by Chariot Victor Publishing, and imprint of Cook Communication Ministries. All rights reserved. Used by permission.
- (3) Author unknown.
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- (2) Matthew Henry's Commentary on the whole Bible, PC Study Bible Formatted Electronic Database, Copyright © 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.

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- (5) The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database, Copyright © 2001, 2003 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.

Chapter 5

- (1) Matthew Henry's Commentary on the whole Bible, PC Study Bible Formatted Electronic Database, Copyright © 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.
- (2) *The Apostle John*, BiblePath.Com.

Chapter 6

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Chapter 7

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- (4) The Teacher's Commentary, Copyright © 1987 by Chariot Victor Publishing. All rights reserved.
- (5) The Biblical Illustrator, Electronic Database, Copyright © 2002, 2003, 2006 Ages Software, Inc., and Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.
- (6) The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database, Copyright © 2001, 2003 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.
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- (8) Author Unknown, poem.
- (9) *The Bait of Satan*, Copyright © 1994, 1997 John Bevere. All rights reserved. Pgs. 15, 18, 64, 137.

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- (3) Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database, Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.
- (4) Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir, song: *So You Would Know How Much I Love You*.

Appendix 4 – About the Author

The author's background includes four different areas of experience:

(1) Working thirty-three years in the challenging and exciting field of computer technology, serving both as a technologist and a manager, witnessing and experiencing almost unbelievable accomplishments and advancements.



(2) Working 50 years in various ministries in three home churches, serving at the individual and leadership levels: Home Bible Study and Discipleship Ministry (40 years), Sunday School Bus Ministry (10) Years, Sunday School Ministry, Compassion and Care Ministry, Home Fellowship Ministry, Youth Ministry, Visitor Follow-up Ministry, Nursing Home Ministry, Singles Ministry, Alcohol / Drug Abuse Mentoring Ministry and Prison Ministry.

(3) Researching, writing and publishing nine books.

(4) Preaching and teaching in many churches in the U.S., foreign missions churches and Bible schools (ordained minister with the United Pentecostal Church International; associated minister with UPCI Global Missions approved for foreign missions support assignments).

His ministry emphasis includes revival and spiritual growth of the saint for the purpose of more effective evangelism of a lost world. Some of the key ministry themes include:

- Relationship with God (impartation from the Father).
- Spiritual Growth (continuous transformation).
- Dominion (engagement in the Father's business with dominion over satan and sickness).
- God's perfect love growing and flowing in our lives.
- Urgency of the Father's business (managing our priorities consistent with our knowledge of the times).

Ministry Venues:

Global Missions (particularly Bible schools)

We have spent several months teaching in Bible schools in: Manila, Philippines; Barcelona, Spain; and Madrid, Spain. We plan to continue this ministry in the future.

Home Missions

(Pioneer works and small churches that are not self supporting)

Every year a portion of our time is dedicated to this area. This is done on a volunteer basis with no expense to the pastor or the church.

Established Churches

Special Services and Seminars

When needed, special services and seminars provide preaching, teaching and training for putting practical revival and evangelism principles into practice. Some of these services and seminars, summarized on the following page, apply to the entire church and some to selected groups in the church. Multimedia is used in the teaching and training presentations.

Special Services and Seminars

(1) Deeper Life Ministry

(Doctrine – preaching and teaching the Word, three levels)

- **New Converts:** Discipleship curriculum and classes.
- **Entire Church:** Teaching and preaching regarding the commitment and actions required to pursue spiritual maturity -- becoming a partaker of His divine nature.
- **Inner Circle:** Jesus modeled this special ministry by choosing a small inner circle of three out of the twelve disciples (Peter, James and John) whom He taught, prayed with and worked with separate from the other nine disciples. Jesus recognized that these were ready to move further into the supernatural and He accommodated that (e.g. Mount of Transfiguration, raising the dead, Gethsemane).

**Promote the pursuit of a greater hunger
and reverence for the Word of God!**

(2) Compassion and Care Ministry

(Actions – fellowship and ministering to needs)

- Planning and developing a more organized and effective Compassion and Care Ministry (Attracting, Winning, Retaining and making disciples).
- Teaching and training for a greater number of the laity to get involved in this ministry.
- Reaching sinners in our circle of influence (operating as both son of man and son of God).
- Caring for visitors and new converts (turning church greeters into caregivers):

Find a need and fill it! Find a hurt and heal it!

Special Services and Seminars

(3) Prayer Ministry

(Power – corporate and private prayer)

- Planning and developing a more organized and powerful Prayer Ministry in the church.
- Involving a greater number of the laity in this ministry.
- Teaching and training regarding the development of a more balanced and effective prayer life (for children, new converts, and others struggling with their prayer life).

(4) Church Growth Vision and Planning (Direction)

- Vision casting and planning to elevate and improve the organization structures and processes for the three key ministries of the church: Deeper Life Ministry (doctrine arm), Compassion and Care Ministry (actions arm), Prayer Ministry (power arm).
- Planning and preparation to reap and retain a greater harvest by mobilizing a greater number of trained laborers in the harvest.

Book of Acts Church Growth Foundational Principles

(1) Doctrine (2) Fellowship / Breaking Bread (3) Prayers

*Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the **apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.** And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. (Acts 2:41-43, 47)*

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