

# *Free To Love*

(How Free Are You?)



Bill Loveless  
Christ Is Life Ministries



# **Free To Love**

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**(Are You?)**

***Bill Loveless***

***Christ Is Life Ministries***

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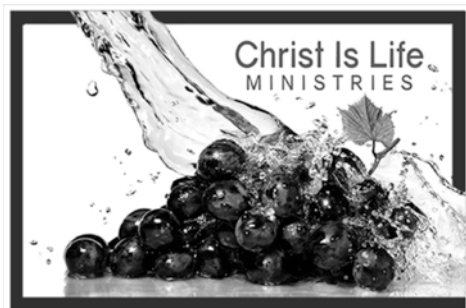
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## Introduction

*“What non-believers truly want to see in Christians is not how much better our lives are than theirs. No, what they’re looking for is one thing: love. For the people of the world are ordinary and broken themselves and in need of love--the love that cancels mistakes, values what is lowly, mends broken hearts.”*  
*Mike Mason*

At the time of this writing, I am on God’s operating table concerning what I will be sharing with you in this booklet. As a result, this is a very personal booklet for me because of what the Lord is revealing to me personally about freedom and love.

I must admit that I have written and taught about God’s love, loving others and even loving myself according to Matthew 22:37-38 for several years. However, it wasn’t until about a year ago when God begin to open my eyes to the fact that I wasn’t understanding the priority God put on loving others. However, because of what God is teaching me, I can apply what Job says in Job 42:5,6 to my understanding of love. He said, *“My ears have heard you but **now my eyes see you.**”*

I can identify with Job in that up until recently it has been more about “hearing” than “seeing.” (I define spiritual sight as spiritual understanding and experience.) Concerning my understanding of love, I am beginning to “see,” understand and experience what love truly is and how it applies to loving others. Therefore, my prayer for you as you move through this book is that you too will have greater “eyes” to understand what our greatest calling is as Christians.

## Chapter One

### **What Is Our Greatest Calling?**

#### **Our Greatest Calling**

<sup>36</sup> “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” <sup>37</sup> Jesus said to him, “ **‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’** <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> The second is like it: **‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’** <sup>40</sup> All the law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.” Matthew 22:36-40

As Christians, we are called to be messengers, evangelists, ministers of the truth, teachers, etc. However, are these are greatest calling? My conclusion based on this Matthew passage is that our greatest calling is to be **lovers**. Lovers of God, others and self. Jesus declares this as our highest priority.

This is further confirmed in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. Paul tells us in verses 1-3 that love is a higher priority than even our gifting. In verses 4-7 we see that from the divine faucet of love flow such things as patience, kindness and humility. Paul ends his chain of thought in verse 13 when he declares that love is a higher priority than faith and hope.

If our highest calling is to be a lover, how might that change the focus of our personal spiritual journey? It is radically changing my journey because my focus since 1998 has been to be a messenger of the Christ-life truths. It was all about getting the message out. As important as that is, is it God’s highest calling for me? I am being persuaded it is not.

Part of that persuasion began when for several years before I would go and speak, my wife would say, "When love is felt, the message is heard." I would politely say thank you but I missed what she was saying because my focus was on the message. For 10 years the Lord was trying to get my attention through my wife but I missed it. However, now the Lord is opening my eyes that loving must come first and that the message must flow from love. Therefore, I am no longer seeing myself as a messenger. Rather, I am seeking to be a lover who delivers a message.

However, this doesn't just apply to ministry, it applies to every area of our life. When people feel loved it can set the stage for people to respond to that love. This why Paul starts 1 Corinthians 14 by saying.

***"Pursue love..."***

This is why I am pursuing love because I believe that I am first and foremost called to be a lover.

What are your thoughts about our highest calling to become lovers?

### ***Is Love What You Do Or Is It Who You Are?***

Dallas Willard says this about love. " Our aim under love is not to be loving to this or that person, but to be a person possessed by love as an overall character of life. Love is not what you choose to do. It is what you choose to be."

I believe Willard's statements are true for two biblical reasons.



## **1. You Are A Container of All Christ's Love**

***“For in Christ all the fullness of Deity lives in bodily form and you have been given fullness in Christ.....”***

*Colossians 2:9, 10a*

As a Christian, according to Colossians 2:9, 10, you have the “fullness” of Christ in you. Practically speaking this means that you are a “container” of all of Christ’s peace, joy, rest, forgiveness, etc. in you. Concerning this study, it also means that you have the fullness of all of Christ’s love in you. Why is this important?

***As a container you POSSESS all of Christ’s love and are POSSESSED by His love.***

Being a container of the fullness of Christ’s love means, you do not have to produce love. Rather, you just need to pour out the love of Christ that you already possess.

## **2. In Your New Identity You Are A Lover**

Willard also said this. “It is not about coming to the unlovable and trying to love them. Rather, come to them as a loving person. Even God doesn't just love, He is love. It is his identity.”

Just as this is God’s identity, it is our identity as well. How so? First of all, we know from 2 Corinthians 5:17 that we have a new identity.

*“Therefore **if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation(new identity)**; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”*

Having a new identity means that we are partakers of the divine nature.

*“For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you **may become partakers of the divine nature.**” 2 Peter 1:4*

Part of being a partaker of the divine nature means that God has imparted to us His divine love in order for us to be lovers. Look at Romans 5:5.

*“and hope does not disappoint, because **the love of God has been poured out within our hearts** through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”*

***Therefore, the OVERFLOW of God’s love to others results from BEING containers of Christ’s love and BEING divine lovers in our new identity.***

As a result of being containers of Christ’s love and being lovers in our true identity in Christ, do we have any excuse not to love others?

## **God Is Not Only Calling Us To Be Lovers But To Be Lovable**

Think about this statement:

***In addition to seeking to love someone, have you thought about BECOMING the kind of person who would be LOVED by others?***

What made Jesus so attractive? Was it is command of the scriptures or His supernatural powers? I don't think so. I believe He was attractive because of the divine love radiating from His heart. Whether we know it consciously or not, we are drawn to Jesus because of the irresistibility of His love.

Therefore, God is not only transforming us to become lovers, He is renovating our soul to become lovable. You can't have one without the other. I believe this is what Paul is trying to tell us in Ephesians 5:1-2

***"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you....."***  
*Ephesians 5:1-2a*

Are you willing to seek the Lord for Him to transform you to become more lovable?

## Chapter Two

### Two Types Of Love

#### **What Kind Of Love Are We Talking About?**

“Love is the essence of being human. It is the connective tissue of reality. It is the oxygen of life.” David Bennar – Surrender To Love

#### **1. Human Love**

Here is a key truth we must understand about human love.

***Any and all forms of human love are CONDITIONAL with EXPECTATIONS and RIGHTS attached.***

Human love always expectations and conditions on loving others. Human love not only expects love in return but also puts expectations on what that returned love should look like. When that love is not returned according to our expectations then we attach fleshly rights to it. Here are some examples of fleshly rights.

Since I am not being loved the way I expect, I have the right:

- To no longer love that person.
- To reject that person.
- To get a divorce.
- To find someone who will love me the way I want to be loved.

Human love is “me” centered and is meted out according to the conditions we place on it. In other words, human love chooses who to love and how much to love them.

There are many forms of human “love” in the Bible. Let’s look at two of them.

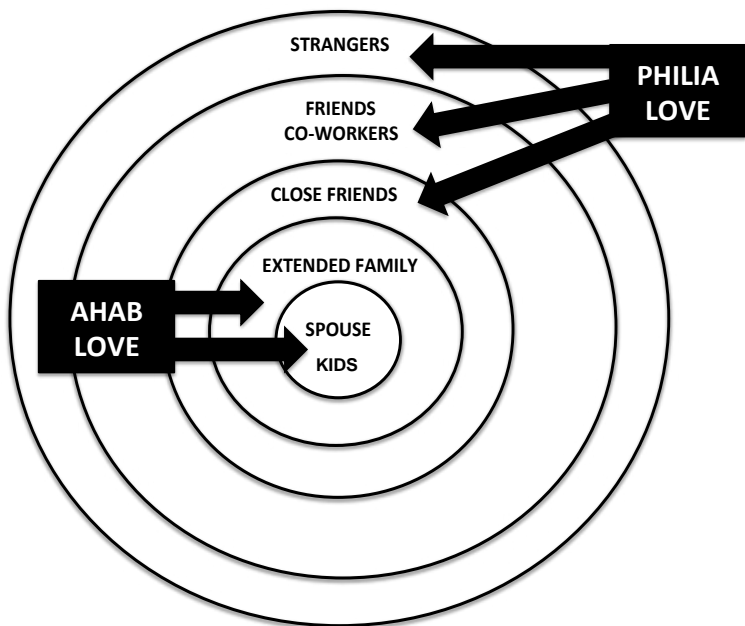
1. **AHAB** — is a Hebrew word that means love of family.
2. **PHILIA** — is a Greek word for the most general type of love in Scripture, encompassing the human love one has for fellow humans, and the care, respect, and compassion for people in need.

To better understand “philia” love, look at Matthew 10:37.

***“He who [philia] loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who [philia] loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”***

Let’s apply these two different forms of love to our relationships. As we know, we all have different levels of relationships. Look at the diagram below that illustrates this. In the inner circle, if you are married, your most personal relationship is your spouse. As you move out from that inner circle, you see that relationships become less personal.

The diagram below illustrates these two forms of love. “Ahab” love is love for your spouse and family. “Philia” love is a human love that we have for every other relationship.



The only form of love that unbelievers can love with is human love. However, the love we, as Christians, are called to love with is called *agape* love.

## **2. Agape Love**

***"And a second is like it: You shall [agape] love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." Matthew 22:39-40***

When it comes to the second commandment, the "love" Matthew is talking about is *agape* love. Let me define *agape* love:

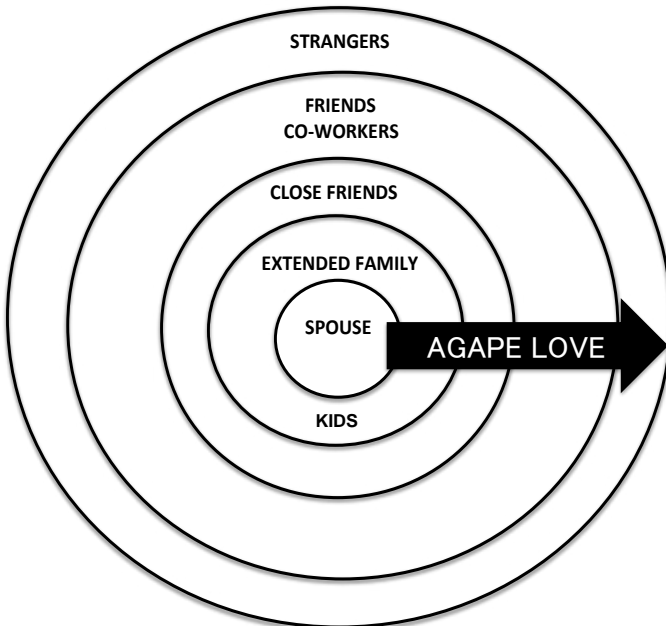
***Agape love is the DIVINE love that ONLY comes from God.***

***Agape love is PERFECT, UNCONDITIONAL, SACRIFICIAL, and SELFLESS.***

While we love people conditionally depending on whether we are exercising *ahab* or *philia* love, it is different with *agape* love.

***Loving others with AGAPE love means that REGARDLESS of depth of the relationship you love everyone EQUALLY.***

This is illustrated on the following page.



Think about it. When it came to *agape* love did Jesus love the disciples or the little children more than he did the self-righteous Pharisees? The answer is “no” because *agape* love is perfect, unconditional, and does not play favorites. When it came to *agape* love, Jesus loved the Pharisees, the little children, and His disciples equally. Therefore, let me end this chapter with this.

***Loving others with AGAPE love is loving people  
with the HEART of Jesus.***

**Note:** People ask, “Do you have to like people that you love with *agape* love?” Not necessarily. According to scripture, we are to *agape* love people like Vladimir Putin but we don't have to like his sinful, fleshly behavior. However, there may be people in our lives we don't like today but may end up liking because of a change in their heart or ours towards them.



## **Chapter Three**

### **Key Truths About Agape Love**

In this chapter, I would like to share some key truths about *agape* love. Whenever I use the word “love” in this chapter, I will be referring to *agape* love.

#### **Law and Love Don't Mix**

Agape love excludes mixing law and love. When it comes to loving others we can be tempted to put conditions on our love or put people under the law. Here are some examples of what I mean.

- I will love him/her when\_\_\_\_\_.
- I will love him/her if\_\_\_\_\_.
- I can't love him/her because\_\_\_\_\_.
- If he/she\_\_\_\_\_ then I will love them.

***Love and law CANNOT co-exist.***

***There is NO law when it comes to APAGE  
loving others.***

Look at your relationships. Do any of these “laws” listed above apply? Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to expose any relationships where you might be putting them under the law.

#### **Love Loves (Regardless)**

I know “love loves” seems simple but the Lord brought this thought to my mind one day while talking

to a friend. As I have thought more on these two words, it became clearer to me that all that Christ's love can do is love. Why?

Agape love has:

- no conditions
- no expectations
- no limitations
- no selfish motives

Agape love doesn't:

- Judge
- Criticize
- Compare
- Take offense.
- Hold grudges.
- Hold onto the right not to forgive.

<p><b><i>Love LOVES</i></b></p>
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### **Love Has No Excuses**

I was talking with a guy about his relationship with his siblings. He kept repeating that he couldn't truly love them or reconcile with them until they repent of their wrongdoings towards him.

As he was talking, the Spirit brought these three words to my mind: "Love trumps repentance." I didn't share this with him but as I thought more about this idea, I began making a list of more of the things that love trumps.

Love trumps:

- Unforgiveness – They must ask for forgiveness before I can love them.
- Unmet expectations – I don't have to love them because they didn't meet my expectations of how I want them to love me.
- Unmet needs – They didn't meet my love needs so I don't have to love them.
- Woundedness – I won't love them because of the woundedness they caused me.

Are you using any of these excuses to not love others?

### **Love = Power**

Until a recent event took place, I had never equated love with power. I realized this when I went to share my testimony at a men's prayer breakfast. I had a long term relationship with the pastor and had taught and preached at his church a number of times.

As I was driving over to the church, the Spirit implanted these thoughts into my mind. "Bill, I want you to first and foremost focus on loving these men and not on giving your testimony." So when I started speaking, I prayed this prayer in my mind during the whole time I was speaking, "Lord, love these men through me."

(Remember the words of Lord through my wife: "When love is felt the message is heard.") When I got through, my pastor friend came over to me and said, "I have heard your testimony many times before but never more powerful than today." I realized that by focusing on

loving these men the Spirit's power was working through His love to minister to the hearts of these men.

Here are some other examples of the power of agape love:

- It can disarm a person and make them open and transparent.
- It can bring a person to brokenness.
- It can draw an unbeliever to salvation.
- It can move people to love you.

Have you every put love and power together? How might it change your willingness to love if you believed there was power associated with it?

### **Love Is An UNSTOPPABLE Force**

*“For **I am convinced that neither** death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, **will be able to separate us from the love of God**, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:38, 39*

Romans 8:38-39 promises that nothing will separate us from God's love. In addition, Paul is telling us is that nothing or no one is going to stop God loving you. Likewise, with other people no one can stop you from loving them. They may say “no you're your overtures of love but that will no stop Christ's love pouring into them through you because Christ's love is unstoppable.

When I think of this truth, it reminds me of one of my board members calls me periodically and says, “I love you Bill and there is nothing you can do about it.” That is the unstoppable love of God.

How would it change your willingness to love those who are difficult to love or you believe would reject your love that there is nothing they could do to stop Christ's love through you?

### **Love Makes You "Safe"**

What do I mean by "safe?"

***By safe, I mean that people will TRUST you to a point where they will share DEEP things from their heart that they might not otherwise share.***

I have found this to be true in my ministry with pastors. My desire is for them to feel safe with me. In general, they can be pretty closed up when it comes to sharing their personal struggles. As I build the relationship with them through loving them, my desire is to come to a place where I am safe enough and trust is built up to a point where they say something like this, "I want share something with you that I have not shared with anyone else."

Becoming a safe person is a process for the most part but loving with agape love can eventually create an atmosphere of safety and trust.

Would you like to become a "safe" person? What might be the results of becoming a "safe" person?

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## **Love Is The Key To Unlock A Person's Heart**

*"and hope does not disappoint, because **the love of God has been poured out within our hearts** through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." Romans 5:5*

I have seen God's love unlock many people's hearts including mine. I had a padlock on the door of my heart that was filled with anger, bitterness, unforgiveness, and woundedness. This went on for many years until God brought a man into my life named David Love. (Only God could bring a Love to a Loveless.)

When I first met David, I was head of the mission's committee at my church. A friend of mine recommended that I consider David and his wife (who were missionaries at the time) to be financially supported by our church.

I took David out to lunch to interview him but as we got into the lunch I began to feel the love of God through David. The next thing I knew, that love was unlocking the padlock to the door of my heart. I couldn't resist it or stop it. Before I knew it, I started pouring out my very troubled heart for the next three hours to this perfect stranger. (Since then David and I have become very close friends.) When I look back on that event, I saw and experienced the irresistibility of agape love unlock my heart.

## Chapter Four

### **How Free Are You To Love?**

I believe that freedom and loving others go hand in hand. Therefore, in this chapter, I would like to take a closer look at the direct relationship between freedom and the ability to love.

#### **We Are Free!**

*"It was for freedom that **Christ has set us free**; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery." Galatians 5:1*

*"For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but **through love serve one another**." Galatians 5:13*

The truth is that since Christ is our freedom and we contain the fullness of Christ (Colossians 2:9, 10) then we are totally free in Christ. Since this is true of us, freedom is not something we are working towards, it is something we are working from. This is good news isn't it? However, there is a problem because I believe that none of us feel like we are completely free. I believe this is true for three reasons.

***The first being that we don't fully BELIEVE we are free.***

***Secondly, we have not walked long enough in APPROPRIATING Christ's freedom to EXPERIENCE His freedom.***

***Thirdly, we simply CHOOSE NOT to appropriate our freedom in Christ.***

## **Freedom and Love**

These three reasons not only negatively impact/impe­de our experiential freedom in general but impe­de our willingness and ability to love as well.

As I have looked over my life and those who I minister to, I didn't know how closely freedom and love were connected. However, I am being persuaded of the following truth.

***The greatest BAROMETER of your willingness and ability to love is directly proportional to your EXPERIENTIAL freedom in Christ.***

Doesn't it stand to reason that the greater the freedom you are experiencing, the greater your capacity to love?

### **You Have To Be Free FROM In Order To Be Free TO**

I would like to add the following corollary to our connection between freedom and love.

***You have to be free FROM whatever is blocking your ability to love in order to be free TO love God, others, and self.***

Let me use the following example to illustrate this principle.



## **Your Spiritual Artery**

As you know, a physical artery contains all the blood it needs to sustain life. However, we know that plaque can build up on these arteries and prevent the blood from fully flowing. If that plaque is not dealt with, we know over time it could eventually kill us through a stroke or heart attack.

What if we applied this analogy to a spiritual artery? In your spiritual artery, you contain all the Life of Christ. (His peace, rest, forgiveness, etc.) For the sake of this illustration, let's focus on the love of Christ. We learned earlier that since we have the fullness of Christ in us (Colossians 2:9, 10), then we contain all of the love of Christ. However, like a physical artery, we have plaque on our spiritual artery as well. I call this "soulical" plaque.

Here are four key things that result in "soulical" plaque?

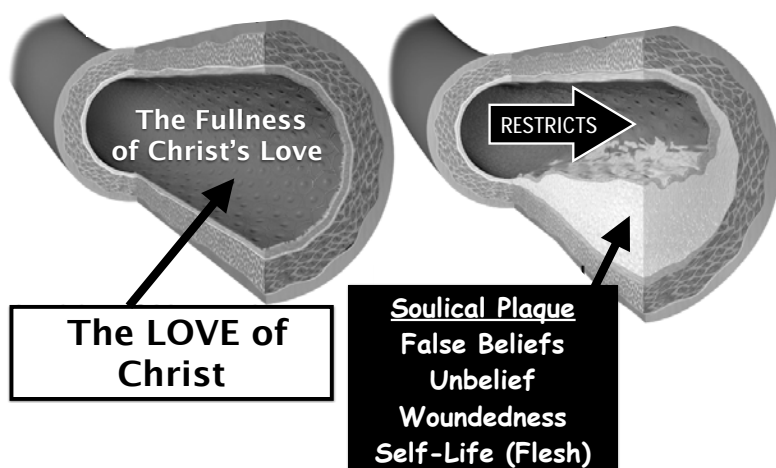
- False beliefs
- Unbelief
- Past woundedness
- Self-life (Flesh)

Here is a key truth concerning the blockage/soulical plaque

***Our soulical plaque not only BLOCKS us from  
LOVING OTHERS, it also prevents us from  
RECEIVING God's love.***

Look at the illustration below that illustrates this.

# YOUR SPIRITUAL ARTERY



How do these four areas of blockage restrict the flow of Christ's love in us and through us?

## **a. False Beliefs**

False beliefs about such things as God's character, our identity, and living the Christian life severely restrict the flow of Christ's love flowing in us.

Let me give you a personal example. I was raised with unloving parents. I did everything I could to earn their love but to no avail. When I became a Christian, I put my earthly parent's face onto the face of God with the result that I believed I had to work to earn God's love. I didn't learn until 30 years later that I am a container of God's love and that I am an unconditional lover in my new identity in Christ. All my time striving to earn God's love prevented me from loving others and receiving God's love.

Here is another example, I ministered to a lady that as a result of her being sexual molested as a child, she felt so guilty and “dirty” that she believed God couldn’t possibly love her. As a result, she couldn’t receive God’s love or give His love to others.

Is it possible that you have false beliefs about God or His truth that is preventing the love of Christ to be received from Him or given to others?

### **b. Unbelief**

Another problem that we all face to some degree is that we may know God’s truth but we don’t believe it. On some level we are all “unbelieving” believers. Our unbelief creates a roadblock to our willingness to give and receive love.

For example, the Bible says the God loves us unconditionally. However, there are many Christians I have ministered to that don’t believe it because their past sins are too great for God to possibly love them. If they can’t receive Christ’s love then they can’t give it to others.

What do you know about God’s truth but struggle believing? In what ways might your unbelief negatively impact giving and receiving the love of Christ?

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### **c. Woundedness**

Woundedness comes in many forms: abuse, trauma, divorce, etc. It can create deep scars in the soul that can keep you focused on yourself with the result, it prevents you from expressing the love Christ.

I ministered to a man whose fiancée was killed by a drunk driver the night before their wedding. When he came to see me fifteen years later he was still very wounded. He was so angry at God that he was incapable of receiving or giving love. It wasn't until the Lord healed his wounded heart that he was able to receive God's love.

How were you wounded in the past? How might that be hindering your ability to give and receive love?

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### **d. The Flesh (Our self-life)**

The flesh always resists loving unconditionally because our flesh is always self-focused and self-serving. Loving from our flesh comes with expectations, conditions, and rights.

Expectations, in that when we love from the flesh there is always an expectation that love will be returned. In the flesh, we love with conditions. For example, the flesh can say, "Not only do I expect you to love me but here are the ways I want you to love me." Loving from our

flesh also includes fleshly rights. My flesh says that I have the right to be loved and if you don't meet my expectations and conditions of how you should love me then I have the right to not love you in return.

In what ways is your flesh resisting your ability to give and receive love?

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**What Is The Toxic Overflow of Our Soulical Plaque?**

***Not only does our soulical plaque restrict the flow of Christ's love, it results in a TOXIC overflow of FLESHLY feelings/behaviors.***

Let me give you some examples of some fleshly behaviors:

- **False beliefs** – through a false belief that my sin is so great that God can't love me, can leave me with fleshly feelings of frustration, self-condemnation or unworthiness.
- **Unbelief** – if I don't believe God really loves me then I might have fleshly feelings of rejection, depression, or fear.
- **Woundedness** – out of our woundedness we can justify fleshly behaviors of unforgiveness, anger,

and self-protection against those who have wounded us.

- **Flesh (Self-life)** – loving out of our flesh can result in an unwillingness to forgive, to repent, to die to our fleshly rights. Loving out of our flesh, can also result in trying to manipulate and control others so they will love us and then reject them when they don't meet our expectations.

There is one more drawback of our soulical plaque.

**The Soulical Plaque Impedes Our Willingness To Love**

***Another result of soulical plaque and fleshly behaviors is that it produces an UNWILLINGNESS to love God or others.***

Our will makes choices based on what we think and feel. Our unwillingness to give and receive love results from the fleshly behaviors that flow out of our soulical plaque. This is crucial because without the Spirit removing the plaque we will be stuck in our unwillingness to love others.

## **Chapter Five**

### **What About Loving The Unlovable?**

#### **Who Is The Unlovable Person(s) In Your Life?**

If you have unlovable people in your life, your flesh is not going to like this chapter. I know because of what happened with an unlovable person in my life.

See if any of the following people fit into your “unlovable” people category;

- Those who have, in the past wounded you or are engaged in wounding you in the present.
- Those who continue to reject or malign you.
- Those who have no interest whatsoever in your life.
- An estranged family member.
- An ex-spouse.
- Those who are always needy and come to you to meet those needs.

Who is the unlovable person in your life? What happened to you for them to be unlovable?

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#### **My Unlovable Person**

My close relative, Jim (not his real name), was a very unlovable person in my life. Jim has held on to every past sin I have ever committed against him (50+ years’

worth.) For many years I didn't have to deal with Jim until we ended up in a business deal together. It involved selling a piece of land. For two years, as we were trying to sell the land, Jim made it a point of trying to make me feel worthless at every turn. Every phone call, text and email was meant to minimize and reject me.

I wanted to get even with him but I restrained myself. However, my flesh was very angry. I so wanted to sell this land and then the next time I would have to see Jim was at his funeral. Before I go on, let me share with you what I did and what we tend to do with the unlovable people in our lives.

### **We Tend To Compartmentalize Unlovable People**

Imagine a prison cell or a room with a lock on the door. Our tendency with those unlovable people in our lives is put them away in a prison cell or a locked room in our mind. I call this “compartmentalizing.” We believe that if we can just not think about them, correspond with them or be around them then we can go about living our lives without consequences. Out of sight and out of mind.

The problem is that fleshly responses such as anger, unforgiveness, or we have towards that person restricts desire and ability to love and those fleshly behaviors will “leak” out into other relationships. The truth is:

***It is impossible to COMPARTMENTALIZE negative or toxic relationships. They will NEGATIVELY impact in some way every other relationship.***



I tried to compartmentalize Jim but it was a losing battle. His face would come to mind or he would call and my flesh would rear it's ugly head. I didn't realize until later that my angry and critical attitude of Jim spilled over into some of my other relationships as well. My fleshly attitudes towards Jim robbed me of loving him and prevented the flow of agape love towards others.

***This is why it is PARAMOUNT that you allow the Holy Spirit to heal and transform your heart.***

Think about a negative relationship that you have had or are currently experiencing. Have you tried to compartmentalize them? How effective do you think you have been?

### **Love and Boundaries**

I won't go into any depth about this issue but suffice to say there are certain abusive and toxic people that you need to draw boundaries for. Especially those who have or can do physical harm to you. You can learn to love them with agape love but because of their potential to hurt you, you must separate yourself from them.

With other toxic people such as those who constantly ridicule you, demean you, or criticize you, you need to set up boundaries from them as well. For them, it may be separation or it may mean being honest with them and telling them they must stop the offensive behavior if they want to have a meaningful relationship.

**I Wanted To Keep Protecting Myself From Jim  
But.....**

I was living in self-protection with Jim. I didn't want to be around him, hear from him or even think about him. However, in the midst of my soulful agony towards Jim, the Lord came along one day and said "What about Jim?" And I responded somewhat sarcastically, "What about Jim?" The Lord said, "I can't let you continue not loving him. You write and teach about love but you are not applying that to Jim." (At times like these I realize why it is so much easier to teach the truth than live it.)

My first response was a fleshly one in that I wanted to keep on protecting myself from Jim rather than loving him. However, I knew in my spirit the Lord was right and it was time to stop self-protecting and start loving. The problem was that I was not willing to love Jim.

(Note: I didn't hear an audible voice from God. These were thoughts He inserted into my mind.)

## Chapter Six

### Laboring To Love

#### Labor To Love

You have heard the expression “labor OF love.” When it comes to loving someone, especially the unlovable people in your life, it is not only a labor of love, it is a labor TO love. Let me define what I mean by “labor.”

***Labor is the INTENTIONAL pursuit of or the willingness to RESPOND to God’s INITIATING work in transforming our lives.***

The word “labor” is used in Hebrews 4:11 when it says,

***“Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest.....”***

The New Testament Greek word for “labor” means “diligence.” Diligence in the Greek means to make haste, to exert oneself, or to endeavor. These words imply an intentional pursuit of something. Since we are not initiators but responders to God’s work in our lives then our “labor” is an intentional pursuit or willingness to respond to God’s initiation in whatever He is doing in our lives.

The truth is that we can’t even produce the willingness to respond. God must produce that as well. However, as we seek the Spirit to transform our wills, we respond with a greater willingness to pursue Him, His will, etc. Now let’s apply this to laboring to love.

***Labor TO love means the INTENTIONAL pursuit of  
or the WILLINGNESS to pursue and depend  
on God to transform you  
to LOVE OTHERS and to become an agape LOVER.***

I have discovered that loving is not passive. It is a very active pursuit of God to transform my will to love others and to become an unconditional lover. This active pursuit (labor) is especially true when it comes to loving difficult people.

One of the key results of the labor is removal of our soulical plaque that will result in a greater freedom to love. Therefore, I want to share some practical application of what it look likes to labor in order to experience freedom to agape love others.

### **Laboring To Experience Freedom To Agape Love**

In this section, I want to share with you some practical application of what labor looks like in order to be freed up to love others. If you sense from the Spirit that any of these are applicable to you, seek Him to transform you as you apply them.

#### **1. Seek the Holy Spirit to expose your COVERT "soulical plaque"**

***Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and  
know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any  
hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way."***  
*Psalm 139:23, 24*

Our soulical plaque comes in two forms. “Overt” and “covert” plaque. The overt plaque is easy to spot but our covert plaque is much more difficult to see. Therefore, seek the Spirit to reveal/expose any false belief, unbelief, past woundedness or areas of your self-life that are preventing you from loving others. Here is a prayer I continually pray about my relationships.

“Lord, when it comes to \_\_\_\_\_(name of person) would you expose any blockage in my heart towards loving him/her.”

**2. Once the Spirit exposes your soulical plaque, ENGAGE Him to do whatever is necessary to set you FREE from it.**

As the Spirit exposes your plaque, seek Him to do whatever is necessary to remove the blockage. For example, you can seek the Spirit to:

- Renew your mind to the truth concerning your false beliefs.
- Move you from unbelief to belief in the areas of your unbelief.
- Heal you of your woundedness and the effects of it in your life.
- To walk in the Spirit’s power over your flesh and transform you to live from Christ-likeness.

Here is an example of engaging the Spirit to remove an area of your soulical plaque.

“Lord, you have exposed my unforgiveness towards my father. I am seeking you to renew my mind to the truth that I am a forgiving person in Christ and transform me to be willing to forgive him.”

### **3. Pursue God To Love – Be INTENTIONAL**

***“Pursue love...”***  
*1 Corinthians 14:1a*

The word “pursue” in the Greek means to run after, to seek after eagerly, and to earnestly endeavor to acquire. Pursuit of anything means you need to focus on and be intentional concerning that pursuit.

***Intentional means WILLFULLY DETERMINING to act.***

Let me further explain intentionality by the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:7.

***“.....seek and you will find.....”***

“Seeking” in this verse means an intentional pursuit of Christ. Have you thought about the converse of this verse? If you don’t seek Christ, you won’t find Him. Therefore, determine in your heart to pursue loving others. This was certainly true with Jim.

When it came to loving Jim, I was very intentional. Primarily, because of the resistance by my flesh. By that I mean, I had to intentionally pursue God to love him through me because my default fleshly thoughts were to dislike him and reject him. Practically speaking I prayed the following prayer.

***“Lord, love Jim through me.”***

Every time the Lord brought it to mind, I would pray that simple prayer.

**4. As you seek to depend on the Lord to love through you, you may not FEEL or EXPERIENCE love for that person.**

Over the six months that I was asking the Lord to love Jim through me I was not feeling or experiencing any love for him. However, what do we know by faith? Every time I prayed that prayer, God was transforming my heart. How can we be certain of that when we are not feeling or experiencing any change? Look at Philippians 1:6.

*“For I am confident of this very thing, that **He who began a good work in you will perfect(bring it to completion)** it until the day of Christ Jesus.”*

Whether you can feel it or not, God is working non-stop to transform your heart. Remember that this is a walk of faith not feeling or experience. The good news is this:

***You will EVENTUALLY feel and experience Christ’s love for that person.***

I will never forget when I first began feeling love for Jim. It was the final confirmation of God’s work in renovating my heart. It will be the same for you. Meanwhile, believe God is working by faith whether you feel it or not.

**5. Seek the Holy Spirit to tear down your walls of SELF-PROTECTION that prevent you from loving others.**

Have you ever thought about love being a wrecking ball? I see love like a wrecking ball in that it

can tear down our walls of self-protection that have resulted from our false beliefs, unbelief, woundedness or our flesh. Here is a key truth we need to understand about self-protection:

***We think these walls protect us from being HURT again when in actuality they PREVENT Christ's love from flowing in and through us.***

I believe the height and thickness of our self-protective walls are directionally proportional to the amount of soulical plaque we contain. For the, my self-protective walls were very high and very deep when it came to Jim. I knew my only hope for being free to love him was for the Lord to break down my walls. (And his)!

In addition to breaking down your personal walls of self-protection, through you God's love has the power to break down other people's self-protective walls. For some relationships it can happen fairly quickly. For others, it may take a long while.

In my case with Jim, even after 60+ years of building up walls between he and I, I witnessed God begin breaking down our walls in six months.

Are you unsure that you have walls of self-protection? I would encourage you to ask the Lord whether or not you have them and then reveal to you in what ways they are impeding your ability and willingness to love others.

## **6. FORGIVENESS is a vital part of freedom.**



***“...forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.” Colossians 3:13.***

I believe forgiveness is an essential piece in being free to love. The reason being:

***Unforgiveness CUTS OFF the flow of Christ's forgiveness in you.***

In addition to cutting off the flow of Christ's forgiveness, unforgiveness:

- Imprisons you.
- Hardens your heart towards that person.
- Builds up your soulical plaque.
- Will be toxic to those around you.

I know these things to be true experientially because of the unforgiveness towards my dad for 48 years. My unforgiveness was like a cancer in my soul. The cancer went from stage one to stage four over those years with the result that my heart grew harder, more resistant, and more bitter. In addition it made me toxic to my wife and everyone else around me.

We really don't have any excuse not to forgive do we? Why? Because:

- We contain all of Christ's forgiveness.
- We are forgiving people in our true identity.
- We have no fleshly rights not to forgive.
- Christ totally forgave us when we were unworthy of being forgiven.

Remember this when it comes to forgiveness.

***It may take several ACTS of forgiveness to eventually experience an ATTITUDE of forgiveness towards that person.***

Because of the many years of abuse, it took several acts of forgiveness before the Lord produced an attitude of forgiveness in me towards my dad. I define an act of forgiveness as a point in time where some thought came to mind or the Spirit brought a thought to mind concerning my past woundedness in order for me to forgive my dad in that moment. It took over two years of experiencing acts of forgiveness for the Spirit to transform me into having an attitude of forgiveness. When the Lord produced that attitude there was no need for any more acts of forgiveness.

In addition, as the Lord was transforming me to forgive my dad, He was also setting me free to begin loving my dad. This freedom didn't apply to just my dad. It started freeing me to love others as well. I wish I could put into words what that freedom felt like. The closest I can come in describing it is that I felt like I was being let out of prison after living in solitary confinement for 48 years.

Who is the person who wounded you that you have not forgiven? Begin with acts of forgiveness, knowing that God will eventually produce an attitude of forgiveness towards that person.

## **7. What If You Are NOT Willing To Love That Difficult Person?**

Even though I talked about this earlier, the ultimate problem in loving others is our willingness or unwillingness to love them. It is easy to be willing to love those that are easy to love. However, when it comes to those who are more difficult we tend to be more unwilling. Therefore, what do we do with our unwillingness to love?

***Our only option is to SEEK God to transform our hearts to BECOME willing.***

This is one of the key reasons I must depend on God because I know that I can't make myself willing. How about you? This is why I prayed the following prayer concerning Jim.

"Lord, give me the willingness to pursue loving Jim."

Initially this was a very difficult prayer to pray but after continually praying it over time, the Holy Spirit changed my unwilling heart to pursue loving Jim.

What about your unwillingness to forgive? The same truth applies. We must seek the Spirit to move us from unwillingness to willingness.

Who is it you are unwilling to love and/or forgive? Are you willing to engage the Holy Spirit to transform you to become willing to love or forgive that person? What might be the consequences if you remain unwilling?

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**8. Remember that if your unlovable person is a Christian then they have a NEW IDENTITY in Christ just like you.**

Why is this truth so important? Imagine a black curtain for a moment. On this curtain are all the different ways you have been hurt or wounded by that person. Behind this curtain is a diamond representing their new identity. What are the results in your heart, if you focus on the curtain and never open it?

Now let's imagine that this is your curtain made up of all your sins, fleshly behaviors, resistance to God and His will, etc. What does God see? Does He focus on your curtain and reject you or does He pull the curtain back and focus on who you are in your true identity and loves you. If God pulls the curtain back, do we have any excuse for not opening the curtain of the unlovable person and seeing them in their true identity?

You see, God does not like our fleshly behavior but that does not stop Him from loving us because of who we are in Christ. Likewise, since in our true identity we are unconditional lovers, then we too must look beyond the curtain and love them as God loves them.

Have you ever thought about God looking past all your sin and fleshly behaviors and still loving you because of your true identity in Christ? Wouldn't the same be true of those Christians who have hurt or wounded you?

**9. THANK God for the unlovable people in your life**

Your response to this point may be, "Thank God for these unlovable people who have caused me great

heartache and pain? Are you kidding me?" I understand how you feel because that is exactly how I felt about Jim.

Then the Lord brought to mind 1Thessalonians 5:18.

***"in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."***

The problem was that when I got to the word "everything" it started flashing like a neon light. Then, the Lord reminded me that "everything" included Jim. I believe there is a key reason for thanking God for those difficult people in our lives.

***God uses thanksgiving for these difficult people as part of the process of setting us FREE (i.e. removing our soulical plaque) from our fleshly attitudes towards them.***

How does He do that? God does it by using these people in our lives to expose our plaque. If we can't see the plaque then we can't engage God to be set free from it.

As difficult as it may be, I would encourage you to spend time in thanking God for the people that you struggle loving. (Even if it is through gritted teeth.)

**10. Loving the unlovable will most likely be a JOURNEY rather than a SPRINT.**

If you are like me, you want to experience transformation sooner than later. However, learning to love people we struggle with can be a journey rather than a sprint for the following reasons:

- If you have struggled with this person for a long time.
- The depth to which they have hurt or wounded you.
- The hardness of your heart towards them.
- The depth of your unwillingness to allow the Spirit to transform your heart.

Remember that even if it is a journey rather than a sprint, there is freedom along the way and certainly at the end of your journey. Are you willing to take the first step?

### **11. What if those you are seeking to love don't RETURN your love?**

This is very hard because as we are being transformed to love that unlovable person, our expectation is for them to see the change and respond to it. However, the truth is that you have no control on whether or not that person will respond.

The good news is this:

***Regardless of their response, you WILL BE set free to love that person UNCONDITIONALLY whether or not they ever respond.***

My encouragement to you as you seek to love that difficult person, is to not have any expectation of them loving you in return. If they eventually do, then praise God for moving in their hearts to respond.

## **What Does Freedom To Agape Love Look Like**

As the Lord continues to set us free from our soulcal plaque, then we will be free to:

### **1. Love without any conditions or expectations.**

In the process, you will find yourself loving less and less with conditions and expectations and loving them more with unconditional love.

### **2. Love without judging.**

Freedom from judgments is freedom indeed. You will find yourself dropping the judgments you have towards people and replacing those judgments with Christ's love.

### **3. Love without fear**

For some, loving someone who has hurt, wounded, or rejected you is a fearful thing. The problem is that loving someone like this makes you feel vulnerable to being hurt or wounded again. I understand because this is how I felt with my relative, Jim. Our human tendency when wounded is to protect ourselves from being hurt again. However, I find it ironic in scripture that it says,

*“...perfect love casts out all fear.....”*

*1 John 4:19*

The irony is that don't love because of fear and yet the opposite is true in 1 John 4:19. Perfect love, which is agape love, has the power to not only remove your fears, but to replace your fear with Christ's courage.

As you seek Christ to love that person through you over time, (it may be a long time based on the depth of your woundedness) you will find yourself growing in courage to love that person regardless of how they have hurt you. This is truly a supernatural process but it is possible because I saw it with my relationship with Jim and I have seen it happen with many of those I have ministered to.

Would you be willing to pray that the Lord would give you the willingness to have Him to love the person who has wounded you through you?

**4. Not only forgive those who have offended you but move to a place of unconditional love for them.**

One of the greatest experiences we can have is to be free from unforgiveness. It allows you to not only forgive but to eventually love your offender. It may be a journey from forgiveness to unconditional love but I have seen it my own life with my dad and Jim and in the lives of many others as well.

Have you ever given any thought to the fact that the Lord might transform you to not only forgive your offender but to eventually love them?

**5. Be more selfless and sacrificial.**

Freedom to love results in being less preoccupied with yourself and being more concerned about others. It produces a greater selflessness and a greater desire to be more sacrificial.

Are there any other results that you can think of that result from being free to love?



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## **The End of One Story and The Beginning of Another**

To sum up what happened with Jim, for six months I prayed the simple prayer that the Lord would love Jim through me. As I said previously, for that six months I didn't feel or experience any love towards Jim. I was very intentional about that prayer when it came to calling him or emailing him. During that time I didn't sense any change in his rejection, criticism or frustration towards me.

Then one day, I got a call from Jim and he said these words which he has never spoken before. "Can you help me?" (He was asking help concerning our business deal.) I knew the Lord had done a work in my heart because I didn't respond with a negative or sarcastic remark. Instead, I said, "How can I help you?"

I realized in that moment that God was changing Jim's heart as well as mine. When we got through with the conversation, Jim uttered two other words I have never heard from him. "Thank you." Little did I know that this was the beginning of a relationship with him because from that time until now, our relationship continues to draw closer.

As of this writing, it has been over a year since that phone call. God continues to deepen our relationship. For me, what God did to Jim and me was a "Red Sea"

event because of the depth of Jim's hatred and my dislike from him. What did the Lord teach me from this?

***God's love CAN move you to LOVE the most  
UNLOVABLE people in your life.***

Amen!

## **Chapter Seven**

### **Loving At A Deeper Level**

#### **Loving At A Deeper Level**

If we are walking in dependence on God, then we know He is transforming us in every area of our lives. However, God is never satisfied with us reaching a level of transformation and being “settled” where we are. I call being settled as getting into a spiritual La-Z-Boy and be satisfied with where we are.

It is the same with loving others. God continually wants to move us to deeper levels of loving others. Therefore, I want to share with you some things the Spirit is revealing to me about engaging Him to love more deeply.

#### **1. MARINATE in God’s love to receive and give love.**

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

Many people struggle loving others because they feel like they can’t or won’t receive God’s love. The problem with this is:

***You can’t GIVE AWAY what you are not RECEIVING.***

One of the ways that can help you receive God’s love is to come to Him in stillness. Psalm 46:10 says, “Be still and know.” Have you thought about the converse of this verse? If you aren’t still, you won’t know. Learning the holy habit of stillness has brought me into a depth of

knowing God that would have otherwise never happened.

I call coming before the Lord in stillness “spiritual” marinating. When it comes to God’s love, I sit still before Him and receive His love. When I come into His presence in stillness, I am not necessarily praying or meditating on some scripture. I am simply being still in His presence and receiving His love and loving Him in return. Being still in His presence has revolutionized how I view God’s love for me and through me.

If you are not doing so, my challenge to you is to begin sitting in stillness before the Lord and marinate in His love. You don’t have to pray or expect the Lord to speak to you. Simply present yourself to Him.

## **2. Be INTENTIONAL in loving more deeply those closest to you**

In addition to being intentional to pursuing love to love the unlovable, be intentional in going deeper in your love for others.

Look at your relationships for a minute. Especially your close ones. Are you growing in your love for them or have you “flatlined” in your love? The reason I ask this is because the Lord revealed to me that I had flatlined in my love for my wife. I was surprised at that but I now see why the Lord said what He did. Now that I am aware, I am now constantly seeking the Lord to continuing growing my love for my wife.

I define “flatlining” as settling for where you are or not pursuing a deeper love with someone. This happens with those closest to us because we have developed repeated patterns of behaviors and

interactions towards one another. We know how a person close to us will typically act, react, respond, etc. to certain things we do or say. We get into what I call relational “ruts” where we no longer are seeking to know them and love them at a deeper level.

Look at your close relationships. Have you flatlined concerning your love for them? If so, begin seeking the Lord to give you a willingness to be more intentional in loving them.

### **3. Are you seeing people in 3D?**

When you think about your people you know or your friends, how much do you know about them? Are you seeing them in one dimension or are you looking at them in what I call “spiritual 3D.” This is what I mean by spiritual 3D.

***Understanding what MOTIVATES what someone is thinking, feeling, or believing.***

Let me give you some examples to explain. What do you know about the following concerning your friends?

- **Family background** – what kind of family they came from. Loving, unloving, abusive, etc.
- **Internal struggles** – what are their internal struggles such as their fears, anxieties, insecurities, etc.
- **Relationship struggles** - are they struggling in their marriage, with their kids, friends, or family.

- **Spiritual struggles** – are they struggling with false beliefs, unbelief, or past woundedness.
- **Adverse circumstances** – have they experienced trauma such abandonment as a child, divorce, or premature death of a parent.
- **Church affiliation or biblical background** – can help you understand why they believe what they do about God or living the Christian life.

Here are some key reasons why knowing someone in 3D is so important in building a deeper relationship.

- It gives you a deeper understanding of how you can encourage them, speak truth to them, or walk beside them.
- It gives you insight in how to be sensitive and compassionate in areas where they struggle.
- It helps you to be discerning in navigating the relationship.
- It gives you understanding in how to pray for them.
- It presses you into the Spirit to love them in spite of their beliefs, their struggles, or their past.

What is the most important result of looking at someone in 3D?

***They will come to REALIZE and EXPERIENCE at deeper levels your love for them.***

Therefore, my encouragement to you is to never stop learning about someone because learning will lead to a deeper loving.

**Note:** I realize that you can't get some people to open up but as we talked about earlier, God's love/power can eventually penetrate the hearts of these kinds of people and they may eventually open up to you. It is truly a labor to love these people but what if God, loving them through you, broke down their walls of self-protection to a point they started sharing more of their heart with you?

#### **4. Loving at a deeper level makes you SAFER**

We talked earlier about love making us safe. I wanted to add to that in light of loving at a deeper level, I intentionally pray that, first and foremost, the Lord will continue to make me safer for my wife. I want there to be an increasing level of trust and safety in our relationship.

This applies to our friendships as well. God wants to work through us to encourage others in their Christian journey. The safer we become, the more likely a friend or loved one will share their heart and allow the Holy Spirit to work through us to speak truth, give compassion, and to transform their lives.

#### **5. Ask the Lord to EXPOSE and set you FREE of any judgments, negative opinions or conclusions that you have towards others.**

As I become more intentional in learning to love at a deeper level, the Lord is exposing my judgments about people. They can be minor judgments or major judgments. Before I go on, let me define what I mean by judgments.

***Any thoughts, feelings, conclusions that you have about someone that result in JUDGING them.***

Some judgments are petty such as a person who goes to a church whose doctrine is different to yours. Others are serious judgments like the one I had with a friend of mine.

One friend in particular hurt me pretty badly in the past and has not repented of what he did. I have gotten past a lot of the pain and still meet with him from time to time. The Lord is calling me to love him at a deeper level and that requires me being set free of some of my judgments about him (of which there were several).

In the past, I would sit there and think, “Doesn't he realize that he hurt me? Why can't he figure it out? When is he going to repent?” The problem is that I became the judge, jury, and executioner. Early on I didn't want to be around him but he was my friend and I knew we would meet from time to time. The Lord did not give me permission to bring up the past situation that caused the pain. What He wanted me to do was to look past my judgments and love him unconditionally.

The process for me was:

- God exposed the judgments and the death those judgments caused in my relationship with him.
- To intentionally look past my judgments and focus on loving him.
- To take every judging thought captive about him when it came to mind.



- When I wasn't with him, I would ask the Lord to heal me and set me free of my judgments.
- Continually remembering that I was called to love not judge.

How this played out was that when I sat with him I would engage God to take those painful, judging thoughts captive and to keep me focused on loving him. I liken this to when Peter walked on water. How did Peter do it? The only way he could do it was keeping his eyes fixed on Jesus.

In like manner, I had to focus on loving him regardless of what judgmental thoughts came into my mind. Early on it was a very hard battle but each time it became easier to focus because the Lord was replacing my judgments with His love. As I am, I can sense he is responding to Christ's love through me. Even though it was hard early on, it was worth it because not only am I loving this guy but this process is helping me in every other relationship as well.

Think about your spouse, family, and friends. Ask the Spirit if He has someone in mind that He wants you to start looking past your judgments and start loving. Begin intentionally engaging God to replace those judgments with His love remembering that it is a process.

## **6. Love people where they ARE. (See their SPIRITUAL potential)**

I know that early on in my 20's and 30's, I was not a very lovable person because of my woundedness and the toxicity of my flesh. (i.e. angry, controlling, demanding, and manipulating) I had some very serious

soulical plaque. However, I will never forget the first man who loved me warts and all. He was a much older Christ-centered man who became a spiritual mentor. In fact, through him I felt the love of God for the first time. I couldn't believe that as toxic as I was, he still loved me. One of the main reasons is that he saw beyond my flesh and saw my spiritual potential.

As a result, he started teaching me and encouraging me in my walk with the Lord. I was drawn to Jesus through him and I experienced the unconditional love through him. My wife's statement me was so true with this man: "The love was felt with the result that the message was heard." Little did I know that because of his love for me at my worst would become a vital part of my spiritual transformation and freedom in later years.

How do you see people? Where they are or where they could be if they knew Christ for salvation or started living from Christ as their Source? Aren't you glad God looked past your sins, your flesh, etc. and saw your spiritual potential? In like manner, ask the Spirit to give you eyes to see the spiritual potential in others and a willingness to be used of the Lord through loving and encouraging them to be part of them realizing their spiritual potential.

## Chapter Eight

### The Overflow of Loving Others

I want to end this book with some final thoughts concerning what the overflow of being free to love others might look like.

#### **Loving Like Christ Results In Being Transformed Into Christ-Likeness**

*“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, **are being transformed into His likeness** with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:18*

Someone once shared with me that they believe there is only one fruit of the Spirit and that is love and that all the other spiritual fruits flow from it. He was pointing me to 1 Corinthians 13 where it says that love is patient, kind, etc. He took it further and applied it to Galatians 5:22, 23 saying that love is joy, peace, kindness.

Whether you agree with him or not I believe that from first and foremost becoming a lover in Christ will result in the overflow of experiencing more of the fruit of the Spirit through us. We see this in the passage below.

*“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of **compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another, and forgiving each other**, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. And **above all put on love**, which is the perfect bond of unity.” Colossians 3:12-14*

Look again at the passage where it says “above all put on love.”

***Paul makes it clear that the HIGHEST priority in our Christian walk is to become a LOVER.***

### **Love Will Pervade Every Area Of Your Life**

One of the results of becoming a lover in Christ is that love will flow into every relationship you have. Look at the following verse.

*“Let **all** that you do be done in **love**”*  
1 Corinthians 16:14

What does this verse mean and what does that look like? I wish I had a complete answer but what I can tell you from what I am experiencing is that I am desiring to make every encounter a love encounter. Whether it is with someone close to me or a perfect stranger, I am intentionally asking the Lord to love that person through me.

### **Love WINS Out**

You may have read the book *Love Won Out* written by John Paulk. He was an unbeliever very committed to the homosexual lifestyle and hated Christians because during gay parades, he would see Christians with signs that read, “Turn or burn.”

Then he got very ill. A Christian couple who lived nearby found out about Paulk and began bringing him

food and taking care of all his needs. This illness went on for a long time but the couple persevered in lovingly taking care of him (and not telling him they were Christians). One day Paulk asked why they were taking such wonderful care of him. They said that they wanted to express the love of Christ and it was that love that irresistibly drew him to Jesus to be saved.

It is hard not to praise God when you read a story like this one. However, we know that not all people will respond like John Paulk. However, it makes no difference the response because for you and me:

***The love of Christ is no longer just an action.***

***It is a WAY OF LIFE.***

I pray that this booklet has not only encouraged you but I also pray the Holy Spirit will use this booklet to move you into a deeper love relationship with Him and with everyone you come in contact with.

*In His love,*

*Bill Loveless*

As a follow-up to this booklet, I would recommend that you read David Bennar's book *Surrender To Love*. You can find this book on Amazon.

If you have any thoughts concerning what you have read that you would like to share or have any questions about what I have written, please email me at

the address below. I would also encourage you to go to our website where you will find that all our discipleship materials are downloadable for free.

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(2-21-19)



# Free To Love

(How Free Are You?)

Jesus sums up the whole law into two commandments: love God and love others. What I will be focusing on in this book is loving others. Freedom and love go hand in hand because if you are not free, you will not be free to love God, yourself or others.

We are going to be looking at the internal and external obstacles that restrict our freedom to love others and what it looks like to engage God to be set free from those obstacles.

We will be looking at the biblical answers to the following questions.

- \* What is our greatest calling as Christians?
- \* What are the obstacles to our freedom to love?
- \* How can we be set free from these obstacles?
- \* How do we love the unlovable people in our lives?
- \* How do we love those close to us more deeply?

I trust the Lord will use this book to encourage you in your spiritual journey in loving others.



Bill Loveless is the director of Christ Is Life Ministries (CILM). CILM is a non-profit, non-denominational ministry that focuses on discipleship. We teach Christians that Christ is our only Source for living the Christian life and what it looks like to be transformed into Christ-likeness.

For further information, see the ministry website at: [www.christislifeministries.com](http://www.christislifeministries.com)

