

Eyes To See

(Seeing Others Through The Eyes of Jesus)



**Bill Loveless
Christ Is Life Ministries**

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**(Seeing Others Through The
Eyes Of Christ)**

Bill Loveless

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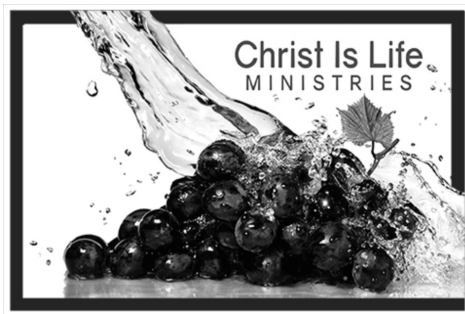
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EYES TO SEE

Introduction.

Have you ever read a book that touched you so deeply that you knew God was using it to move you to the next level of transformation and intimacy with Him? That is what happened when I read the book *Practicing The Presence of People* by Mike Mason. It is one of the most profound books on relating to others that I have ever read. The impact was so great, I felt led to share some of his thoughts as well as mine on this subject.

One of the things Mason says is that when relating to other people, we either look past them, look at them and don't really see beyond the externals, or see them through the eyes of Jesus. When I read this it struck a very deep chord within me because I minister to many people. How was I looking at those I minister to? Was I just looking at them or actually seeing them with the eyes of Jesus? I wasn't happy with the Holy Spirit's answer.

You see, I was under the mistaken idea that I really saw people through the eyes of Christ, only to hear from the Spirit through Mason's book that I was looking at others but not really seeing their hearts. I don't know if you have ever questioned where you are concerning seeing others, but I hope some of the truths we talk about will give you some answers.

I encourage you, as you read these truths, to ask the Holy Spirit this question, "What do you have to say to me about what I just read?" I want to begin by looking at one of our major tendencies when it comes to building relationships with people.

Chapter One

We Tend To Put People In BOXES

What Makes Up The Boxes We Put People In?

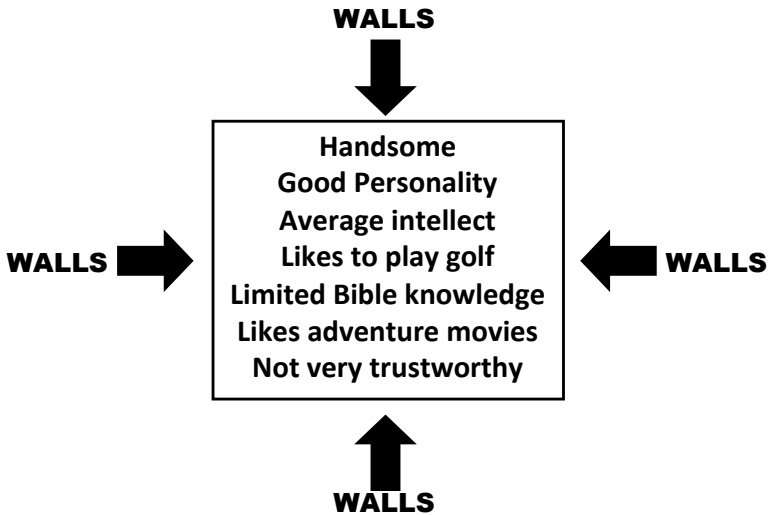
One of the things I have discovered about myself and others is that we tend to put people in “boxes.” These boxes are made up of characteristics that we observe about a person. Here is an illustration of some of the characteristics we might put in a box.



Think about your spouse, a friend, or a co-worker of yours. When you think about that person, what characteristics would you add to the box?

Based on these characteristics, we start coming to conclusions about people. These conclusions form the walls of the box. Let me illustrate on the following page.

The Walls Are Our CONCLUSIONS



In this illustration, I took each of the characteristics of the previous box and inserted my conclusions.

As we construct the walls of the box, we develop patterns of relating to that person based on the conclusions we have come to about them. Think of someone close to you? What are some of the conclusions you have to come to about them?

What Is The Downside Of Drawing Conclusions About A Person?

1. What if your conclusions about a person are WRONG?

If you have come to the wrong conclusions or you are not reading a person properly, then you will be relating to them unrealistically. As you build the relationship, your

wrong conclusions could eventually create misunderstandings, conflict and possibly hinder the depth that you can go in your relationship.

2. What if you don't know or don't understand how a person's PAST BAGGAGE is negatively influencing their life?

Here are some examples of our past baggage.

Do You Know A Person's Past Baggage?



- a. Past woundedness – caused by rejection, abuse, or traumatic events can seriously impact a person's ability to trust.
- b. Family background – can negatively impact how a person relates to others if they came from a highly dysfunctional family.
- c. Adverse circumstances – such as divorce, abandonment, health struggles, etc. can create hypersensitivities in relating to others.

- d. Addictions – such as pornography, alcohol, or drugs can negatively impact relating to others.
- e. Relationship struggles - current or past struggles can impact a person's ability to trust.

We are all carrying baggage of one kind or another. This past baggage unfortunately impacts our hearts, our present circumstances and our relationships. Therefore, it is important to understand that some of your conclusions may not be correct about a person if you don't understand their past woundedness, family background, etc.

Conclusion

Coming to the wrong conclusions and not knowing someone's baggage and how it is impacting their lives can lead to such things as your insensitive, misjudging someone, or lacking compassion. You, like me, may have thought you had someone sized up only to realize that you had come to the wrong conclusions. For me that always resulted in my judging them. We will look at the difference between evaluating versus judging someone in the next chapter.

Chapter Two

Evaluating Versus Judging

The Upside And Downside Of The Boxes

There is an upside and a downside to the boxes we put people in. The upside to building boxes is what I call **evaluation** while the downside to building boxes results in our **judging** people. Let me explore this a little further.

Evaluating

Let me start by defining what I mean by evaluating someone.

EVALUATING someone means coming to conclusions about a person WITHOUT judging them.

Evaluating someone can serve a positive and even a spiritually useful purpose. For example, knowing a person's personality, their Bible knowledge or their likes and dislikes can give you a framework to befriend them, understand them minister to them, and to see them through the eyes of Jesus.

Think about this statement for a moment. "Evaluating a person should lead to valuing them."

Judging

I define judging as:

Any conclusion we come to about people that results in our JUDGING, CRITICIZING, and/or CONDEMNING them.

Unfortunately, we are all guilty of judging others to one degree or another. What might be some of the reasons why we tend to judge other people? Here are a few reasons I have discovered:

- To elevate or think more highly of ourselves (i.e., pride);
- To feel more secure about ourselves;
- To diminish our own inadequacies and/or
- To feel like we are in control.

Are there any other reasons why you may be tempted to judge others?

The main problem with judging is that it is not only sinful but it results in fleshly responses to a person such as being critical, withdrawing from that person, or not forgiving him/her.

In addition, just as evaluating others leads to valuing them, judging them devalues them and robs you of ever seeing them through the eyes of Jesus.

Crossing The Line From Evaluating To Judging

Another temptation we can struggle with is with us when we move from evaluating others to judging them. For example, as I begin to get to know someone I am just evaluating him/her. However, he/she can do or say

something that might tempt me to cross the line from evaluating to judging.

This is why walking in a moment by moment dependence on the Spirit is crucial because only the Holy Spirit knows where the “line” between evaluating and judging is. He will warn us when we are approaching the line or have crossed it, but only if we are listening to Him. I have illustrated this idea below.



Judging Someone Can Result In SOULICAL Cataracts

For those of you who are too young to be worrying about cataracts, they are a medical condition in which the natural lens of one or both eyes becomes progressively clouded resulting in blurred vision.

As with physical cataracts, soulical cataracts can begin to form as we continue judging someone. This will create a blurred or distorted view of someone because of the judgements we have made about him/her. This is a problem because:

***Looking at others through your SOULICAL cataracts
PREVENTS you from EVER seeing people
through the eyes of Christ.***

By your failure to see another through the eyes of Christ, you won't be able to:

1. See how and where the Holy Spirit is working in a person's life.
2. See the spiritual transformation that may be taking place in someone.
3. See what the Holy Spirit wants to do through you to minister to him/her.

Just like condensation building up on your windshield obscures your vision, soulical cataracts prevent you from seeing people through the eyes of Christ. Let me give you another analogy to further explain the consequences of judging someone.

Do You Focus On The Frame? Or The Picture?

I assume you have pictures of family members around your house. When you walk past the picture of one of your favorite family members do you focus on the picture or the frame? The answer is obvious: the picture. But, when it comes to relating to people our tendency is to look at the frame versus the picture. Let me explain.

Let's assume the frame is a person's fleshly tendencies, personality flaws, or things that irritate you about that person. Let's further assume that the picture is a person's true identity in Christ. (If you do not understand what I mean by true identity, I will explain it later in the

booklet.) The question is: What do you focus on: the frame and judge? Or the picture and love?

Unfortunately, in relating to people we struggle with, our tendency is to focus more on the frame. I recently saw this played out with a couple I was counseling. They had been married several years but had hit some roadblocks in their relationship. Over the years these roadblocks had created a growing tendency for each of them to focus on the other's "frame" rather than on his/her picture. They had lost sight of each other's true identity because they were both focusing on the other's fleshly frame and judging one other.

Think about those you struggle with. Isn't it easier to focus on the frame of their flesh and the things that irritate you about them and judge them rather than focus on the picture of their true identities?

I confess that I am guilty of this. Consequently, I am seeking the Lord to constantly remind me to look past others' fleshly frames and see them as the Lord sees them in their true identity. As I am developing a holy habit of doing this, I find those people are easier to love.

Let's look at the next chapter to better understand what it means to see others through the eyes of Jesus.

Chapter Three

Seeing Others With The Eyes Of Jesus

Introduction

As I said at the beginning of this booklet, we see people in three different ways;

- We look past them as if they weren't even there.
- We look at them but we don't see beyond their exterior.
- We see and experience them with the eyes and heart of Jesus.

This last way is the way God wants us to see Christians and non-Christians alike. To begin to understand how to see others through the eyes of Christ, let's first look at some of the biblical words for the word "see."

The Meaning Of The Biblical Word "SEE"

*"And they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. **Seeing** their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, "Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven." Matthew 9:2*

Here are some of the various meanings of the word "see" in the Bible:

1. to discover.
2. to understand.
3. to pay attention to.
4. to examine.
5. to become acquainted with.
6. to discern or perceive.
7. to focus on.

By way of application, let's look at three bible passages that use some of the above definitions of the word "see." Let's begin with Job in Job 42:5:

*"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear;
But now my eye sees You."*

Leading up to this verse, Job has just gone through a physical and emotional hell in Chapters 1-37. But I think the worst part of his ordeal was hearing God tell him who He was versus who Job was. It took three chapters (38-41) of God's talking to Job for him to "see" what the Lord was trying to tell him. In the first part of this verse, "hearing" meant he had an intellectual understanding of what the Lord was saying but now he had eyes to "see" what the Lord meant.

Applying our definitions of "see" to this verse meant that Job discovered and understood what the Lord was trying to tell him.

Another one of my favorite passages that describes Biblical "seeing" is when Elisha prayed for his servant to have "eyes" to see the chariots of fire on the mountain.

*Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, I pray, **open his eyes that he may see.**" And the **LORD opened the servant's eyes and he saw**; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.
"2 Kings 6:17*

When Elisha's servants eyes were opened he perceived and discovered the chariots of fire ringing the mountain.

We see this several places in the New Testament, as well. Here is an example from Luke when Jesus was talking to the disciples:

*“Turning to the disciples, He said privately, “Blessed are the eyes **which see the things you see**. For I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things **which you see**, and did not see them,” Luke 10:23, 24*

Jesus was telling the disciples that they had spiritual eyes to discern and perceive things that non-Christians did not have.

Let's Make This More Personal

Let's look at the list of the definitions of “to see” again and make it more personal by adding the word “people.” (Take your time and read slowly through the list.)

1. to discover PEOPLE.
2. to understand PEOPLE.
3. to pay attention to PEOPLE.
4. to examine PEOPLE.
5. to become acquainted with PEOPLE.
6. to discern or perceive PEOPLE.
7. to focus on PEOPLE.

I don't know about you but when I add the word people, then seeing becomes very personal. How would it change how you see people if you could apply these definitions?

Keep in mind that even though we could apply human understanding to these definitions, the kind of “seeing” we are talking about is a supernatural, spiritual

seeing. Another word you might add to the beginning of the definitions above is the word “supernaturally.”

***SPIRITUAL sight is produced SUPERNATURALLY
by the Holy Spirit so that you will be able see
others through the eyes of Jesus.***

Applying this to the three verses we looked at previously, without God’s supernaturally opening Elisha’s servant’s eyes, he would have never seen the chariots of fire. With Job, it was a supernatural opening of his spiritual eyes to understand and discern what God was trying to tell him. With the disciples, Jesus supernaturally opened their eyes and they understood spiritual truths that others could not.

How do you think it might change how you “see” people if you were supernaturally examining, focusing on, understanding and/or discerning them?

What Did Jesus See When He Looked At People?

We see the answer in 1 Samuel 16:7;

*“The Lord doesn’t see things the way you see them.
People judge by outward appearance, but
the Lord looks at the heart.”*

***God ALWAYS looks past the externals of a
person and looks at their HEART.***

This is what God instructed Samuel when He chose the young David as His next king.

You may not know what the biblical use of the word “heart” means so before we go any further, let’s look at how Strong’s concordance defines the heart:

The thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, affections, purposes, and endeavors of the SOUL.”

When Jesus looked past people’s exteriors and saw their hearts, what did He see?

- a. People’s needs.
- b. People’s woundedness.
- c. People’s pain.
- d. People’s self-protection.
- e. People’s fears.

Since Christ is in us and we have His discernment, don’t we have the ability to see other’s hearts like He does? The struggle for us is that we are tempted to focus on the outer man instead of the inner man.

Let me give you an example. There is a gay man who walks for exercise in my neighborhood. We sometimes walk at the same time and cross paths. Before I began to understand the truths that I am sharing with you, I would walk past him and focus on the fact that he was gay. This led me to judgment and self-righteousness rather than love. It was very subtle but true nevertheless.

The Lord asked me to begin looking at this man’s heart through His eyes. As I did, I began to see a man who

needed love and grace, not judgment. By my moving from focusing on his outer man to his inner man, I became free to love and have compassion for him.

Mike Mason says this about the heart, “Practicing the presence of people requires listening to the heart. It is from the heart that we relate to people. The heart, not the mind is the binding agent.”

Think about a friend or a relative that you have problems relating to. Begin asking the Holy Spirit to give you eyes to look past their flesh and their irritating traits and see them through the eyes of Christ.

What Do We Do With What We Can See?

Why would God give us eyes to see others’ needs, pain, self-protection and fears? Certainly not to judge them.

***God gives us eyes to see the hearts of others
in order to MINISTER to them.***

As you grow in Christ and the Spirit sharpens your spiritual eyesight to see people’s needs, pain, woundedness, etc., you will discover God’s purpose is for you to learn how to minister to people’s hearts by speaking His truth to them, encouraging them, and walking with them. Isn’t this what Jesus did?

Part of the overflow of our growth in Christ is we will become be less concerned about ourselves and more concerned about others. That is why spiritual growth and

a growing spiritual eyesight go hand in hand. Let me end this chapter with the following truth.

God doesn't just want to make us aware of people's needs, pain, etc., He wants to WORK through us to ENCOURAGE, to HEAL, and to TRANSFORM them.

Chapter Four

The Ultimate Objective Of Seeing Others Through The Eyes of Christ

It Is Summed Up In The Second Greatest Commandment

“And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment.

***And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.** On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” Matthew 22:37-40*

Ultimately, seeing others through the eyes of Christ means LOVING them.

The end result of seeing others through the eyes of Christ is loving them with the love of Christ. In this chapter, I want to look into the four kinds of love we can have towards others and what loving others in Christ looks like.

If you have been a Christian for some time, you are well aware of the first and second great commandments. What I find interesting is that we are to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind but we are to love others as we love ourselves.

To answer these questions let's look at the four Greek words for love.

Four Kinds Of Love

There are four Greek words for love. The first two are not used in the New Testament but I want to include them for the purpose of our study.

1. **EROS love** — is a sensual or romantic love that is reserved for a married couple.
2. **STORGE love** — (pronounced: STOR-jay) is a term for family love. The affectionate bond (in a healthy family) that develops naturally between parents and children and brothers and sisters.
3. **PHILIA Love** - It is 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 three forms of love to the different levels of our relationships.

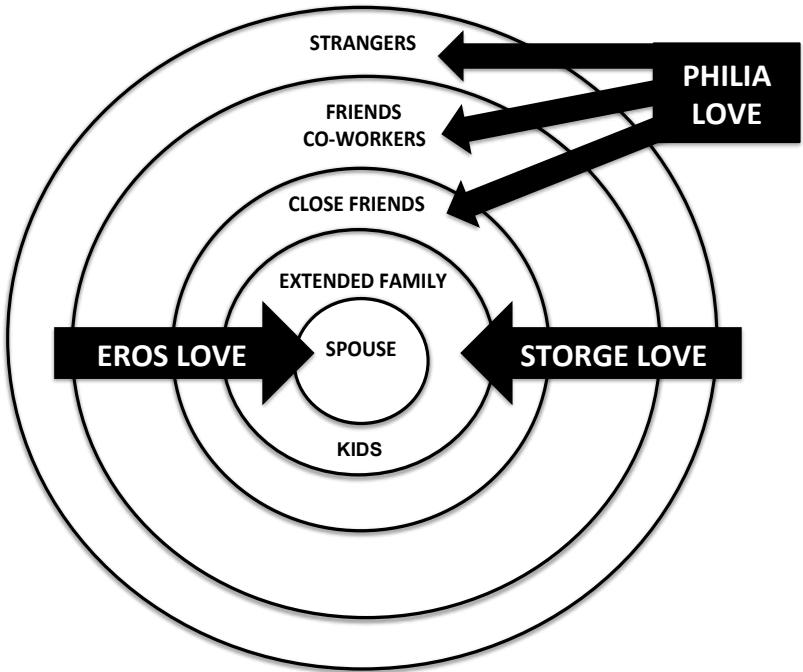
We Experience Different Levels of Relationships.

We all have different levels of relationships. Look at the diagram on the following page 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.

Let's apply the three forms of love we discussed previously to the diagram. "Eros" love is reserved for a spouse. "Storge" love is the love we have for our children and extended family. "Philia" love is a human love that we have for every other relationship.

[**Note:** I realize this diagram can break down if you are struggling with your spouse or are estranged from your adult children, etc. My assumption is that you are having healthy relationships in each of these categories except strangers.]



The key truth that we need to understand about these three forms of love is this:

***Eros, storge, and philia love are all
SUBJECTIVE and CONDITIONAL.***

In other words, these forms of love will vary according to the depth of your relationships and, being human, you will impose conditions on others for you to love them. Look at your relationships in light of *eros, storge, and philia* love. You will see that you express these forms of love in differing degrees based on the depth of each of those relationships. In others words, you have different levels of trust, intimacy, and bonding in relating to others.

For example, you will experience a deeper love for your children than you will for your friends. We even see this with Jesus in His relationships with His disciples. Even though there were twelve disciples, Jesus loved them differently with *philia* love. Jesus had a closer relationship with Peter, James, and John, with John possibly being Jesus's closest friend as we see in John 13:23:

*“There was reclining on Jesus’ bosom one of His disciples, **whom Jesus loved.**” John 13:23*

However, there is one more word for “love” used in the New Testament.

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. This is the fourth type of love. It is the highest of the four types of love in the Bible.

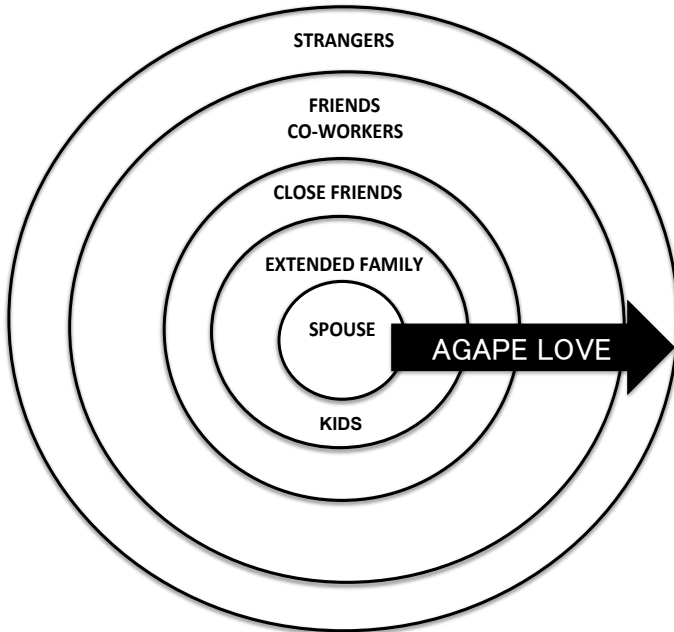
Agape love is the DIVINE love that ONLY comes from God which is His immeasurable, incomparable love for mankind.

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

While we love people differently depending on whether we are exercising *eros*, *storge*, 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 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, the next time you see a person standing on a street corner wanting a handout take a second look at that person and remember that God loves them just as much as He loves you.

Do We Have Any Excuses Not To Love?

I don't know about you but when it comes to loving others with agape love, my flesh comes up with many excuses not to love, especially for those unlovable people

in our lives. 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 constantly asking you for something.

Let me share with you about one of my relatives who is one of those unlovable people. Jim (not his real name) has held on to every past sin I have ever committed against him (50+ years’ worth.) He didn’t care for me and made a point of trying to make me feel rejected and worthless at every opportunity. I could go on but you get the picture. Jim was unlovable as far as I was concerned. The question is: Do I have an excuse for not loving this person?

My flesh was screaming “Yes” I have the right not to love Jim. I just wanted to get him out of my life. Then the Lord came along one day and said “What about Jim?” And I said a little sarcastically, “What about him?” The Lord said, “I want you to start loving him.” I said “Why? He is not worthy of my love.” The Lord responded, “Really? Since when do you get to pick and choose whom you love? Aren’t you glad I don’t do that?”

I knew the Lord had me there so let me share with you how the Spirit convinced me of my need to love Jim and how He changed my heart. (Note: I didn’t hear an audible

voice from God. These were thoughts He inserted into my mind.)

How The Spirit Changed My Heart Towards Jim

There was a process the Lord took me through to change my heart towards Jim. This may not be the same process for you but there are some key truths that I believe apply to all of us in loving the unlovable.

Initially, the Spirit reminded me that I contain the fullness of Christ which means I contain all of His *agape* love.

We see this in four passages:

*“...for **God is [agape] love.**” 1 John 4:8*

*“For **in Christ all the fullness of Deity lives in bodily form and you have been given fullness in Christ.....**”
Colossians 2:9, 10a*

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

*“And **my God will supply all your needs** according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:19*

First, since God is love, we have all of Christ’s *agape* love poured into our hearts. God will supply all of the love we need when it comes to loving others.

Second, the Spirit reminded me that since God loves our unlovable people with *agape* love, then what right do I have not to love them with that same love.

Third, the Spirit reminded me, Matthew 22:39 is NOT the second great “suggestion.” It is a command. In other words, I had no alternative but to love him. He also reminded me of Luke 6:27;

“But I say to you who hear, [agape] love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.” Luke 6:27

Enemies might seem like a strong word so just insert “unlovable people” for the word “enemies.”

Fourthly, since I was unwilling to love this person, I asked the Lord to give me the willingness to love him.

[Note: This may be a real sticking point because your fleshly will could say “no.” If so, keep asking the Spirit to give you the willingness to love this person until you find yourself becoming willing.]

Finally, over the next six months, I prayed through every one of Jim’s phone calls and emails that the Lord would love him through me and that the Lord would change his heart towards me and my heart towards him. The change began when I got an email from Jim thanking me for something I helped him with. Since I have never heard a “thank you” from him, this was the beginning of changed hearts on his part and mine.

Here we are a year since that email and God has supernaturally transformed our relationship. It truly is a “Red Sea” event because of the depth of hatred Jim had for me for decades and my reciprocal dislike of him.

Applying this example to your life, think of an unlovable person in your life and begin seeking the Spirit to give you the willingness to love that person. As you do, the Lord will, over time, change your heart towards that person.

Chapter Five

What Is The Major Obstacle To Loving Others?

The Obstacle

The main obstacle to loving others is our SELF-LIFE.

I simply define our “self-life” as our focus on ourselves, our selfishness, and our lack of being others-focused. In other words, self-life says that the world revolves around me and it is up to me to get my needs met, to be loved and to be thought well of. If we live out of our self-life we become “takers” instead of “givers.” Being a taker prevents us from giving love to others.

I understand because I used to be so self-absorbed that I didn't care about anyone but me. My question was, “Why wasn't everyone and everything else about me?” How can we be givers when we are consumed with ourselves?

Similar to what plaque does in blocking the flow of blood in a physical artery, your self-life is the plaque on your spiritual artery that blocks the flow of the love of Christ in and through you.

Loving Others Versus Self-Protection

There is another reason why living from our self-life prevents us from loving others and that is self-protection. One of the more profound things Mason says in his book is that loving others and self-protection are mutually

exclusive. When I read this, I wasn't sure I agreed with him but the more I sought the Spirit on this issue, the more He convinced me that Mason was right.

Before I go any further let me explain what I mean by self-protection.

***SELF-PROTECTION means constructing walls
in the soul to try to PREVENT others from
HURTING or REJECTING us.***

No one escapes being a “self-protector” because it is one of the results of the fall of Adam. We were all born self-protectors since we were all born in Adam. It was part of Adam’s DNA that we inherited. Much like Adam and Eve put on fig leaves after the Fall to try to hide their shame, we build walls of self-protection to keep others from getting too close. Why do we protect ourselves?

1. What Is Behind Self-Protection?

I believe the key driver in self-protection is **fear**. Fear and self-protection are like two sides of the same coin. Let’s look at some examples of fear to better understand this.

- Fear of rejection.
- Fear of being hurt (again).
- Fear of failure.
- Fear of being exposed or found out.
- Fear of losing control.

When you look at this list do any of these fears apply to you? Could you add any other fears to this list?

If you have experienced any of these fears, would you agree that you tend to protect yourself so that you won't be rejected, hurt, be exposed (again), or lose control? As a strategy to avoid being hurt, we think we have to build walls of protection. Our fears are the bricks of the walls we are building. The very walls we think will protect us, in fact, imprison us.

***These walls IMPRISON us because they
PREVENT us from loving others.***

Let me share with you a personal story to bear this out. I remember when I was on a retreat with some pastors. I was sitting there one night listening to a lecture when this thought came to my mind, "What if they find out who I really am?" This thought was quickly followed by a second thought, "I will be exposed." The final thought was "If they find out who I really am, they will reject me."

The fears of exposure and rejection rose up and rapidly consumed me. My walls of self-protection went up immediately and my plan was to do whatever it took the rest of the retreat not to be exposed. Do you think in the middle of my self-absorbed thoughts that I cared for anyone other than me? I had no capability of loving others because I was too busy figuring out how to protect myself.

Fear blocks responsiveness to others. David Benner, in his book, *Surrender To Love*, said it this way: "Fear interferes with the impulse to love. Energy invested in maintaining safety and comfort always depletes energy available for love of others."

2. Self-Protection Can Be Conscious or Unconscious.

For most of us, self-protection is so ingrained that we do it subconsciously. Much like breathing, we are not even consciously aware we are doing it. But, there is also a conscious self-protection where we are very aware of what we are doing to defend ourselves against people or circumstances.

3. Ways That We Self-Protect.

a. Avoidance.

We try to avoid people or circumstances that might penetrate our self-protecting walls. If we can't avoid people like our spouses or our co-workers, we try to avoid conversations or situations with them where we might be hurt or exposed.

For example, I knew a married couple who avoided talking about their first baby that was lost at childbirth. Instead of dealing with the pain of the loss, it became the elephant in the room that was never dealt with and it eventually destroyed their marriage.

Do you tend to avoid being hurt, rejected, exposed, etc.? If so, what do you do to try and avoid it?

b. Withdrawal

Following on the heels of avoidance is withdrawal. We withdraw to insure that no one can get close enough to hurt us. We can emotionally withdraw by shutting down our emotions. This is much like breakers in an electrical breaker box that we turn off so that we won't feel anything.

We can also physically withdraw. I met with a husband who told me that every time he perceived there was about to be an argument with his wife, he left the room to avoid being hurt and rejected.

Let me take you back to the retreat I talked about earlier. As these thoughts of exposure and rejection started coming, my next thought was, "I have to get out of here before they find out." I thought my only option was to escape or withdraw from the situation in order to protect myself.

Do you struggle with wanting to withdraw emotionally or physically in order to protect yourself?

c. Being Critical and Judgmental.

You have heard the expression that the best defense is a good offense. One of my favorite offensive (and it was offensive) attitudes was to be critical and judgmental of others. I would find ways in my mind to be critical of others in order to build myself up or to assure myself that I was okay. If I could convince myself that someone was "less than" me, then I could deceive myself into believing this person was not a threat.

My being critical of others was also a way I used to drive that person away before they could hurt or reject me. It was a form of "doing it unto others before they could do it unto me."

Do you have a tendency to be critical or judgmental as a defense mechanism to protect yourself?

d. Manipulation.

We all are guilty of some form of manipulation. One of the reasons we manipulate is to insure that no one gets close enough to wound or expose us. Manipulation can be like a chess game in that we move the pieces (i.e., people) on the chessboard to specific places to avoid being exposed. We can also manipulate by silence, guilt, or flattery.

In what ways do you find yourself manipulating others to protect yourself?

e. Being In Control.

Another leftover from our Adamic DNA is our desire to be in control. Appealing to that desire to be in control was part of Satan's ploy with Adam and Eve when he said that they could "be like God" (Genesis 3:4). Being in control and being like God go hand in hand because every time we desire to be in control we are asking God to step aside so we can take over. When it comes to self-protection, we believe that if we can control ourselves, others, and our circumstances, then we will avoid being hurt, rejected, etc.

Control falls into primarily three categories:

1. Controlling others.

We believe that if we can control those around us then they will not be able to hurt, reject us, or expose us. One of the ways we do this is by having "safe" conversations. Safe conversations can include small talk about the weather, sports, or hobbies that deflect those

you are talking with from saying something personal that might hurt or expose you.

We also try to control others by keeping them at arm's length. One of my favorite ways of doing this was by being a people-pleaser. If I could successfully please people, then they would be more likely to accept me and less likely to reject me.

2. Controlling our circumstances/situations.

One of the ways I tried to control the circumstances was to avoid small group Bible studies. Those could be very dangerous because I knew at some point I would be called upon to share how some Biblical truth or book I was reading applied to me. The same would apply to both men's retreats or couples' retreats. You couldn't hide out at events like this for long because sooner or later you would be exposed.

What are some circumstances or situations you try to avoid in order not to be exposed?

3. Self-control.

We believe this method of controlling is the most effective because trying to control others and circumstances is much more difficult and unpredictable. To keep our thoughts, words, and emotions in check is crucial to staying in control and not letting anyone get near your heart. I see two types of self-controllers: overt and covert.

Overt self-controllers are easy to spot. They really have their guard up and are carefully choosing their words to protect themselves. Perfectionists are an

example of overt self-controllers because will try to do everything right to avoid being rejected or seen as inadequate.

Covert self-controllers are harder to spot because so often they have mastered the art of self-control. They have developed their masks so convincingly that you believe the mask is who they really are. In reality, though, they are using their mask to stay in control. I have seen covert self-controllers come across as sensitive and caring but it is all designed to deflect you away from seeing what is really going on in their heart.

In what ways might you be trying to be in control by your words, actions, or behaviors?

4. Why Self-Protection Is A Lie.

a. The self you are protecting is DEAD.

The problem with self-protection is that it is a lie. Why? Because the self (self-life) you are protecting was crucified with Christ on the cross (Romans 6:6).

*“knowing this, **that our old self [self-life] was crucified with Him**, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.” Romans 6:6*

We see this as well in Galatians 2:20 which says, “I [my self-life] am crucified with Christ.” This begs these two questions: (1) Why are we trying to protect something that is “dead?” and (2) Can a dead man have any fears or does a dead man need to protect himself?

b. You have a NEW self.

*“Therefore, if anyone is **in Christ, he is a new creation.** The old [self] has passed away; behold, the new [self] has come.” 2 Corinthians 5:17*

The good news is that God didn't just crucify your old self. He gave you a new self [new identity] that does not need protecting. Why? Because your new self is righteous (2 Corinthians 5:21), worthy (Psalm 139:14), and accepted (Romans 15:7). The greatest gift, other than salvation, is you have a new self.

What Is The End Result?

1. You no longer have to protect yourself.

Since your OLD self has been crucified and you now have a NEW IDENTITY (new self) you no longer have to PROTECT yourself.

Let me make this point by sharing with you an analogy similar to the picture analogy I shared previously. If you are looking at a beautiful painting what do you focus on: the frame or the painting? Before you answer that question let me define the frame as “self/self-protection” and the painting as your true identity or new self.

Early on in our Christian walk our tendency is to focus more on the frame of self-protection than the picture of our true self. As we begin to understand and walk in the truth of our new identity, then we start to see ourselves through God's eyes with the result that we are able to move our eyes from the frame to the painting.

The truth is that God does not see the picture frame of self/self-protection because with him it no longer exists. In fact, in Ephesians 2:10, God calls you a “masterpiece.” Let me ask you a question. Is there any need to protect yourself if you see yourself as God’s masterpiece?

[Note: If you are learning about your new identity in Christ for the first time, I recommend you go to our website (www.christislifeministries.com) and look for the complete written and video study on our new identity called, *Do You Know Your True Identity?* This study will give you a clearer understanding of this wonderful truth.]

2. As you grow in your belief that you have a new identity, you are FREE to love YOURSELF and OTHERS.

“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

Think about it for a moment. Since you have a new self that doesn’t need protecting, shouldn’t that free you up to love others? The answer is a resounding “yes!” As the Holy Spirit removes that self-protective plaque out of your spiritual artery, the love of Christ will flow more freely through you.

Let’s go back to the second great commandment which says that you are to love your neighbor as yourself. Misinterpreted, loving yourself can be a problem for two reasons. One is that people can be self-haters and on the other end of the spectrum people can love themselves out of pride or conceit. (Narcissists fall in this category.) What is the truth about loving yourself?

Since God gave you a NEW self that is holy and righteous and LOVED by God, you can love your new you in the SAME way God does.

This can be a very difficult truth because if you don't know you have a new self then you will always be looking at yourself through the distorted lens of pride, inadequacy, unworthiness, etc. However, as you learn and grow in your understanding of your new identity, you will grow to love your new, true self. The overflow of loving your new self is now you will be able to love others in like manner.

For example, if you see yourself as a self-deficient person as I did, then you will see yourself as inadequate, unworthy, etc., rather than through the lens of Christ who loves you because He sees the real you. In that case, it is difficult to receive God's love and give love in return. Therefore, to be able to love others like Christ does, I must start by recognizing, accepting and loving my true self in Christ.

Boundaries Versus Self-Protection

Before we go further, I think it is important to distinguish between self-protection and boundaries. Establishing healthy boundaries is not self-protection. Healthy boundaries are necessary to protect us from abusive or caustic relationships. Healthy boundaries are also necessary with very needy people who you feel are emotionally "sucking" the life out of you.

Now that we have laid the groundwork for seeing others through Christ's eyes, let's look at some practical applications of these truths.

Chapter Six

Engaging God in Order to See Others Through The Eyes of Jesus.

Now that we have a foundation for seeing others through the eyes of Christ, let's look at some practical applications that I hope will help you see and understand these truths that I am sharing. Keep in mind that these steps are not legalistic "how to's" They are simply practical examples to live out the truth.

1. As you look at those around you, ask the Holy Spirit to EXPOSE or REVEAL the boxes you have built around them.

"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

"Examine me, O LORD, and try me; Test my mind and my heart." Psalm 26:2

Begin looking at all your relationships and determine what boxes you may have put others in. While many of them will seem easy to figure out, you will still need to seek the Holy Spirit to expose or reveal people that you may be judging unknowingly.

Example of a step of faith: "Lord, I am asking You to reveal those I have put in boxes unknowingly with the result that I am judging them."

2. Ask the Holy Spirit to RENEW your mind to the truth about how He sees people and begin TEARING DOWN the people boxes.

*“And do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” Romans 12:2*

Concerning those you have put in boxes, especially those who are closest to you, you will need to draw on the Holy Spirit’s power to (1) renew your mind to the truth that God sees them as worthy of love and not judgment, and, (2) begin tearing down the walls of the boxes you have erected.

Example of a step of faith: “Lord, I am asking you to renew my mind to the truth of how you see people’s value and give me the willingness to remove the boxes I have built.”

3. Since we CANNOT produce agape love, begin DRAWING on the Lord to love others through you.

*“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*

Since, apart from Christ, we can’t love others with agape love, our part is to ask Him in faith to love others through us.

Example of a step of faith: “Lord, I am asking You to love _____ (think of an unlovable person in your life) through me with Your agape love.”

4. Seek the Lord to start REMOVING your soulical cataracts so you can begin to SEE people through His eyes.

*Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, I pray, **open his eyes that he may see.**" And the **LORD opened the servant's eyes and he saw**; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." 2 Kings 6:17*

Without engaging God to remove your soulical cataracts, you will continue to be tempted to see others through the distorted lens of comparison and judgment. Therefore, call on Him to let you see others with His eyes.

Example of a step of faith: "Lord, like Elisha, open my eyes that I may see people through Your eyes."

5. Seek the Lord to be your WILLINGNESS and DETERMINATION to:

1. Stop judging,
2. Stop comparing yourself to others,
3. Stop protecting yourself,
4. See others as He sees them, and
5. Love others with agape love.

*"For **I am determined** to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." 1 Corinthians 2:2*

In this verse, Paul is referring to a spiritual determination. So, too, we are to have the same determination when it comes to seeing others through the eyes of Christ. Therefore, as you seek the Lord to transform your heart, you will need to draw on His willingness and His determination to move you away from judging people, self-protection, etc.

Another way of saying this is you will need to be intentional.

Being INTENTIONAL is a CONSCIOUS and DETERMINED CHOICE to pursue God and to depend on Him to transform our hearts.

We can't be passive when it comes to any area of our spiritual transformation. Our part is to intentionally choose to pursue God to be transformed.

Example of a step of faith: “Lord, I am intentionally seeking You to be my willingness and determination to see others as You see them, to stop protecting myself, and to love others with agape love.”

6. When you catch yourself starting to JUDGE someone, engage the Holy Spirit to take that thought CAPTIVE and remind you of the truth.

“We tear down arguments and every arrogant obstacle that is raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to make it obey Christ.”
2 Corinthians 10:4-5

Every people box that you built started with one thought. As those thoughts were connected and reinforced you drew conclusions about people, warranted or not. To remove the box from a person begins with the next thought. Instead of taking ownership of the next thought that negatively reinforces your judgments of a person, seek the Holy Spirit to take that thought captive.

[**Note:** When Paul says “we” in the passage above, he is referring to your depending on the Holy Spirit’s power to take every thought captive.]

Example of a step of faith: “I am being tempted to judge this person. I am asking You to take that thought captive. Remind me that the only One who has the right to judge is You.”

7. Continue to seek the Holy Spirit to PERSUADE you to believe that you are a NEW CREATION so that you can drop the walls of self-protection.

“... and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.” Colossians 3:10

As your belief that you are a new creation grows, the less you will need to protect yourself. (Remember the “self” you are protecting is dead.) Seek the Lord to continue persuading you that you are holy, righteous, loved, accepted, etc.

Example of a step of faith: “Lord, I know that I am a new creation but I need You to further persuade me that I am who you say I am and that I have Your eyes to see that there is no further need to protect a self that is dead.”

8. Seek the Lord to REPLACE the FEARS that drive your self-protection so that you can LOVE others.

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.” 1 John 4:18

Be intentional about seeking the Lord to replace your fears with His love. I call it “holy displacement.” Let me give you an example to explain. If you were to keep pouring clear water into a glass full of dirty water, what would happen? The clear water would eventually displace the dirty water. So, too, as we continue to draw on Christ’s agape love, it will eventually displace your fears.

Example of a step of faith: “Lord, I am asking you to replace my fears with Your agape love. Move me from fearing and self-protecting to loving others.”

9. Ask the Holy Spirit to REVEAL to you where He is changing your thoughts, beliefs, behaviors, and willingness to love others.

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

Psalms 51:10

As we take this journey of seeing others through the eyes of Christ, I believe it is vital to ask the Spirit to reveal to you when you have a loving thought versus a judgmental thought or you are seeking to love someone instead of judging. As we depend on Him, He is constantly working to renew our minds, change our hearts and love like He loves. Therefore, ask Him to reveal to you how He is changing you.

Example of a step of faith: “Holy Spirit, I am asking You to show me where You are working in my heart. Reveal to me when I am experiencing a changed thought, belief, or behavior about someone.”

Chapter Seven

What Will You See?

What Will Be the Results As You Begin to See People Through the Eyes of Jesus?

1. You will find yourself no longer judging others based on the boxes you have built.
2. The Lord will remove your soulical cataracts so you will see people as worthy of agape love.
3. You will be taking those judging, condemning, and self-righteous thoughts captive as the Spirit prompts you.
4. You will find yourself looking past the externals and seeing into the hearts of people.
5. As the Holy Spirit persuades you of your new identity, you will be more comfortable in your own skin and less apt to self-protect.
6. The overflow of your transformation will be an increasing love, grace, and compassion towards others.

Mike Mason says this, “When we begin to practice the presence of people, we begin to feel one with them in spirit. We find ourselves seeing things about them that we never noticed before, understanding them from the inside out, tenderly identifying with their weaknesses, and marveling at their larger-than-lifeness” May this become our prayer and experience as well.

You Will See The Spiritual Potential In Every Person

***By spiritual potential, I mean where others
COULD be SPIRITUALLY if they understood, believed
and walked in Christ as their LIFE.***

It is easy for me to see a person's potential if he/she is seeking and hungry for the truth. Where I struggle seeing it is with those who are living out of their flesh and resisting God's working in their lives.

However, God not only sees the here and now but He also sees the spiritual potential in every person regardless of their pursuit of Him or their resistance to Him. God, because of His omniscience, can see where a person's life could be if he/she chooses to live from Him as his/her Source. He has provided us with many stories about people in His Word as examples.

We see this in God's interactions with the stuttering Moses who felt totally inadequate to lead his people out of Egypt. God saw Abraham's spiritual potential in the midst of his unbelief when he chose to sleep with Hagar. God even saw it with Gideon in spite of his putting out the fleece and being paralyzed with fear when he faced the Midianites.

When it came to Peter, can you imagine how many times Jesus was shaking his head when Peter would utter the craziest things or when he was showing off to the other disciples by walking on the water? Even in those moments, Jesus saw the potential in Peter that we can now see when we read Peter's letters.

I even look back on my life when I was in total despair and having suicidal thoughts. I saw no hope and no future and yet what did God see? Potential. He didn't flinch because He knew that I was at the end of my rope and was about to turn an eternal corner that would change my life forever. Can you look back for a moment and think about a time when you saw little potential for yourself and yet here you are experiencing Life in Christ?

The Lord reminds me of my story as a way of telling me that He wants me (and you) to see the spiritual potential in every person, believer and unbeliever alike. They may not be saved or they may be saved and are resisting God. They may even be rejecting or turning their backs on you. It makes no difference where a person is spiritually because as long as they are alive there is potential and hope.

If we respond to certain people with self-protection or unwillingness to love them because of where they are spiritually, then we disqualify ourselves from being used by the Lord to participate in His transforming work in their lives. You see, God wants to use us to be part of other people's experiencing their potential. He wants us to participate with Him in their transformation. But we cannot do that if we are judging them, rejecting them, or not pursuing them.

As the earthly father ran towards the prodigal son, so our heavenly Father runs toward us. He is not deterred by our resistance or our rejection of Him. He keeps coming because He sees the potential in each one of us. Aren't we glad He does?

Part of my experiencing that potential was God's bringing believers into my life who saw spiritual potential in me. I am forever grateful for them because I shudder to think where I would be without their willingness to invest in my life.

Therefore, seek the Lord to give you eyes to see the potential in every person and be willing to be used of the Lord to see that potential realized. Think about it. You can be used of God to make an eternal investment in another person's life that will change his/her destiny forever. I believe this is what 1 Peter 3:15 is telling us.

"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."

1 Peter 3:15

You Will See People As SPIRITUAL "Diamonds"

*"I will give thanks to You, for **I am fearfully and wonderfully made.** Wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well."*

Psalms 139:14.

The word "fearfully" in this verse means to be astonished or in awe. Could this mean that God sees you and all those He has created as being awesome?

Instead of looking at others and seeing boxes, you will begin to see them as diamonds. What do you see when you look at a diamond? You first see that it is multi-faceted. In addition, not all diamonds are equal. Diamonds have subtle differences in the way they are cut which completely changes their brilliance (white light), fire (rainbow color light) and sparkle. When you look at a diamond in the sunlight, doesn't

it vary in its brilliance and sparkle as you examine the different facets of that diamond?

As we begin to see people as “spiritual” diamonds we will see that each person is individually cut by God to reflect His glory through his/her unique personality. God continually cuts and shapes our lives as we are being transformed into becoming lovers of others. Therefore, seeing with the eyes of Jesus means we will see and experience people with the same awe and wonder that God sees us.

Practicing The Presence of People

Mike Mason says this: “The sign that we are practicing the presence of people is that they begin to become infinitely precious to us. The sound of their voice, the look in their eye, the smallest detail of expression and mannerism-everything about those we love is more eloquent and fascinating than the greatest works of art.”

Love WINS Out

You may have read the book *Love Won Out* written by John Paulk, a former homosexual. He was 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. It was this couple’s displaying Christ’s love for this man that broke him with the result that he trusted Christ for salvation.

What God wants us to do as we see others through the love of Christ is to write our own stories about how God’s love

through us for others defeats our judgments of them. This is because ultimately this life is about loving others with the unfathomable, unconditional, and eternal love of God, as confirmed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3:

*“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. 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. If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn’t love others, I would have gained nothing.” 1
Corinthians 13:1-3*

As we end this book, my prayer for you is that you will engage the Holy Spirit to remove any soulical cataracts you may have in order that you experience a deeper love for others as you see them through the eyes of Jesus.

Blessings in Christ.

Bill Loveless

P.S., 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:

Christ Is Life Ministries

Website: www.christislifeministries.com

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(7-1-18)

Eyes To See (Seeing Others Through The Eyes of Jesus)

When you look at people, do you look past them, do you look at them or do you actually “see” them with the eyes of Jesus? Most people I talk with will admit (as I do) that they look past or look at people. What does it mean to see others through the lens of Christ? Why is that even important?

I wrote this booklet to answer those two questions as well as the following ones.

- * Why do we tend to put people in “boxes?”
- * What does it mean to look at but not “see” a person?
- * Why do we tend to protect ourselves?
- * How do we move past our self-protection to love others?
- * What does it look like to see others through the eyes of Jesus?

I pray that the Holy Spirit will use the truths in this booklet to reveal to you how to see others with the eyes of Jesus.



Bill Loveless is the director of Christ Is Life Ministries (CILM). CILM is a non-profit, non-denominational ministry that focuses on discipleship. Our focus is teaching Christians what it means for Christ to be our 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

