

From Randall J. Brewer's book
**BORN TO LOVE,
CALLED TO SERVE**

BORN TO LOVE

Understanding
God's desire for man
to love Him and
one another

RANDALL J. BREWER

BORN TO LOVE

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FORWARD:
BORN FROM THE BLOOD

T rue love comes only from above. You can love your spouse, your children and even your car. But if your love isn't founded and rooted in God, it isn't the kind of *significant* love that will last.

People living outside of God's love have been known to live together for decades, and some all their lives. The kind of love they experienced wasn't the kind of love God designed for us, but a self-centered and Godless love. Some spouses have watched their loved one draw their last breath believing the departing one is going to a better place, yet there is no proof. The only proof will materialize on Judgment Day when all accounts are settled.

In this mini book by author Randall J. Brewer, the experience of God's love and how it was designed to drive the existence of mankind to a God-chosen outcome, will change your life forever.

We causally mention the blood of Jesus in church and in our Bible studies, but the change His blood has on every born-again Believer has never been explored and revealed as Randall has illustrated through the knowledge of the Holy Spirit. It does more than wash away our sins. It causes such a complete change to the human spirit that 21st Century Christianity has only just begun exploring the width, height and depth of the change this all inclusive blood of Christ causes.

Blood has a voice, therefore it is not only life, but in the spiritual realm it is alive ^{Genesis 4:10}. An entire lifetime can be consumed in the exploration of the subject of Christ's blood, and I'm convinced we will spend a millennium in heaven on such an exploration, and an eternity basking in the experience.

I would encourage you to pick up every publication that has Randall J. Brewer's name on it, and use it as a life-long guide to the nature and attitude of the Triune God. Books by men become antiquated and eventually a useless collector's item. But the literature composed by the Holy Spirit will outlast time itself.

Paul Baker,
Publisher and friend of Randall J. Brewer

CHAPTER ONE

BORN TO LOVE

Nothing in this universe happens by accident. For everything there is a reason and a purpose. There is a reason for the sun, the moon, and the stars. There is a reason for summer and winter, spring and fall. There is a reason for rivers and oceans, trees and grass, rain and sunshine. For all things there is a reason and a purpose.

There is also a reason and a purpose for you. God measures life not in terms of years or time, but in terms of purpose.

Purpose is the original intent or reason for a thing to exist. We are all created with a destiny and purpose so the question needs to be asked, "Why were you born? For what purpose did God place you on this planet?"

In both the Old and New Testaments people are commanded to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind." Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37

Jesus said in John 13:34, "A new commandment I give to you, that you also love one another." Jesus also said to "love your enemies" Matt. 6:44 and we are told to "love your neighbor as yourself." Lev. 19:18; husbands are to love their wives Eph. 5:25; and wives their husbands. Titus 2:4

The list is endless, for love is the theme of the entire Bible. In fact, God "is love." 1 John 4:8 So why were you born? The answer is obvious. Clearly, you were born to love.

Paul wrote in Eph. 5:1-2, "Therefore be

followers of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."

As born-again believers, we are to be imitators of God as dear children imitate their parents. Jesus came to lay down His life for us and we ought to do the same for others.

The Message© Bible says, "Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn't love in order to get something from us but to give everything of Himself to us. Love like that." Eph. 5:2

We are commanded to love one another to the same measure as Jesus loved us. It is so important that you let God love you. because your receiving of love is limited to your giving of love.

When you let God love you, when you receive His love, you will learn to love yourself, because you'll see who you are through His eyes. As a result, you'll also be able to see others through the eyes of God, and what follows will be a continual outpouring of love into their lives. By doing this you become a witness to the entire world.

Jesus said, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:35 The sinners of the world are not drawn into the Christian faith by us loving them, but rather when they observe the demonstrated love that we have for one another.

For what purpose did God place you on this planet?

Whether we realize it or not people are watching how we live. Our actions speak louder than our words and this is why there must be zero tolerance for strife between fellow believers. Strife is the manifested presence of the devil whereas love, joy, and peace is the manifested presence of God. Heb. 13:1 says “Let brotherly love continue.”

The Message[®] Bible tells us, “Stay on good terms with each other, held together by love.” Our God is a covenant God and we need to begin to love one another with a covenant love that comes as a result of knowing Him.

Jesus said in John 15:9,10, “I’ve loved you the way my Father has loved me. Make yourselves at home in my love. If you keep my commands, you’ll remain intimately at home in my love. That’s what I’ve done - kept my Father’s commands and made myself at home in his love.” Jesus told us to abide in His love and this is what it means to live and make yourself at home in His love. You live inside yourself and not some geographical location. Living in a certain city won’t make you happy even though many people think it will.

You live from the inside out and if your heart is right you can be happy anywhere. If your heart is not right you can live in a mansion and have all the money you need and still not be happy. The key to everlasting joy is to make yourself at home in His love. “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” John 15:11

LOVE IS NOT A FEELING, BUT A DEBT

Paul wrote in Rom. 13:8, “Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who

loves another has fulfilled the law.”

Love is a debt you owe to everybody even if you feel like they don’t deserve it. It should be on the forefront of our minds that God loved each of us when we were yet sinners and also didn’t deserve it.

Love is not a feeling, but rather is a spiritual force radiating out of your innermost being. God is love and His love is revealed and manifested by you being nice to someone. This love can produce good feelings but you can love without feelings or even with bad feelings.

Love is a decision, and when the right decision is made, you can love somebody even when you want to tell them off or punch their lights out. The nature of the flesh is to respond to hurt feelings. If someone slaps you, you want to slap them back harder.

The nature of the flesh is to respond to hurt feelings.

The key is to be led by the Spirit and not by fickle feelings that are forever changing from one moment to the next. Gal. 5:15,16 tells us, “But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”

Love does no harm to a neighbor ^{Rom. 13:10} and The Message[®] Bible records these instructions from Romans 12:

1. “Love from the center of who you are; don’t fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle.” ^{vv. 9,10}
2. “Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath.” ^{vs. 14}

3. “Don’t hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you’ve got it in you, get along with everybody.” vs. 17,18
 4. “Don’t let evil get the best of you; get the best of evil by doing good.” v. 21
- Love thinks no evil ^{1 Cor. 13:50} and takes no thought about how to hurt somebody.
 - Neither should one rejoice when your enemy falls and gets hurt.

God loves through you, and you should help that fallen person get back on his feet and point him in the right direction.

In the Spirit we are to “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might,” ^{Eph. 6:10} but in our relationships with other people we are to be harmless as a dove. Titus 3:1b, 2 tells us “to be ready for every good work, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.”

Love cares when something good happens to somebody else. Love is not jealous or envious but instead rejoices when somebody else gets blessed. John, the disciple of love who laid his head on the bosom of Jesus, gave what is probably the most prominent instruction about love when he wrote in 1 John 3:18, “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

The Message[©] Bible says, “let’s not just talk about love; let’s practice real love. This is the only way we’ll know we’re living truly, living in God’s reality.” John knew that God will move when love is demonstrated.

THE COVENANT OF LOVE

The entire Bible is a book of love and throughout its’ pages are recorded several principles of covenant love that should govern the thoughts, words, and actions of every born-again child of God.

John 15:12,13 tells us, “**This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down ones’ life for his friends.**”

One of the first things we learn about the love of God is that it always gives. John 3:16, probably the most famous verse in all of scripture, begins by saying, “**For God so loved the world that He gave...**” Just as faith without works is dead ^{James 2:26}, so also love without works is dead.

Love is an action and giving is the greatest expression of love. If we love, we give. We are the love child of a love God and love always gives. Paul wrote in Gal. 2:20b, “I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

Don’t just give of your resources, give of yourself. Instead of paying to have your church painted, get up off that comfortable chair and go down to the church and help do the work. Don’t love from a distance but personally get involved. 1 Tim. 6:18 says, “Let them do good that they may be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share.”

BORN TO LOVE, BORN TO GIVE

Giving should be the lifestyle of every born-again believer and this includes a whole lot more than money. Finances is only a small part of giving, and before money can be given, we need to first be willing to cheerfully give of

Love gives whatever is needed.

ourselves. We need to get involved in the lives of other people and when we do we'll quickly realize that there is always something we can give that will promote the lives of those we come in contact with.

We can give people our love, time, loyalty, fellowship, counsel, prayers, our words and any natural resource we have at our disposal. Love gives whatever is needed and we also need to be consistent in our giving. Daily look for ways to give and enrich those around you.

- Buy a co-worker a cup of coffee or bake a dozen cookies and give them to a neighbor.
- Give somebody you know a phone call and tell them how blessed you are to have them as a friend.
- Offer to baby-sit at no charge for a single mother with four children who never gets a chance to be by herself and do the things she truly enjoys.
- Take an elderly person to the shopping mall with you or a fatherless child to a ballgame.
- And, if nothing else, you can always give somebody a smile and a friendly "hello."

Let people see the joy that is within you. And who knows? These acts of kindness may birth in them the desire to know the same God you know. What more can a person offer another than the opportunity to receive eternal life?

John 4:23 says, **"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him."**

THE POWER OF PRAISE

Everybody likes praise. God likes praise. People like praise. Even cats and dogs like praise. Praise is a sign of acceptance and is this not the primary need of all people? Throughout history people have gone to great lengths to accomplish great deeds all for the purpose of being noticed and accepted by others. People have a craving to be received, willingly and favorably. They want to be approved of and believed in. We need to learn to accept people not based on our preference or their performance, but because God has accepted them.

Paul says in Rom. 15:7, "Therefore receive one another just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God."

The Message[©] Bible states, "So reach out and welcome one another to Gods' glory. Jesus did it, now you do it!" Just as we praise and worship God for His worthiness, so must we compliment and lift up other people for theirs.

Words are the most important thing in the universe. They can build up or tear down and they reveal what is in a persons' heart. When you submit your life to God, submit your words to Him as well. "Watch the way you talk. Let nothing foul or dirty come out of your mouth. Say only what helps, each word a gift." Eph. 4:29

WORDS THAT BENEFIT

The NKJV[©] Bible instructs us to "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers." Eph. 4:29 Paul is telling us to take our words, wrap them with truth, love, and sincerity, and as a gift present them to whoever is close

Praise is a sign of acceptance.

by.

The NIV[©] states, “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

Words that do not benefit another person must be left unspoken. Compliments spoken from the heart make people feel good about themselves and births in them the desire to respond back in a favorable manner to the person giving the compliment. This leads to unity among the brethren and this should be the ultimate goal of every believer.

A compliment spoken from the heart can *break the ice* between strangers and will open the door that leads to a life of love, fellowship, and faithful service to our Heavenly Father. If you will take the time and make the effort you will always find something good in the lives of people to compliment them about.

And, by all means, be sincere in your praise giving. Nobody likes false praise. Covenant love means you will be real and honest in your relationships. Let your compliments come from a conviction in your heart that you really believe what you're saying. If you will remain sincere, in turn, you also will be blessed as you heap praises upon those around you. Prov. 15:23 says, “A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is.”

THE ATTITUDE OF GIVING

Our God is a giving God and there is no better indicator of His presence in our hearts than in the attitude we develop about giving. How you give determines and reveals what's inside of you. Jesus said in Matt. 10:8b, “**Freely**

you have received, freely give.” You received because God freely gave.

It pleased the Father to have Jesus pay the price for our sins ^{Isaiah 53:10} and it pleased Jesus to do so. ^{Heb. 12:2} You can't doubt God's love for us, because He gave us the most precious thing He had - His Son! Jesus submitted His will to that of the Heavenly Father and went to the cross for us proving that suffering that doesn't benefit others is vain. Jesus shed His blood and freely gave up His life for us and because He lives in our hearts we can freely give to others.

Godly love gives with no strings attached and with no thought of being repaid. If you're selfish and stingy or if you expect something in return from your giving, then you're either not born-again or you're not letting the love of God lead you and guide you.

Godly love gives with no strings attached.

If people owe you something because you gave to them, then God is not your source - people are - and this is unbelief. If you want something in return, then you're not giving. Love is not a loan, it's a gift that must be given quickly, willingly, and gladly.

One must forever be on guard because the devil is a thief who will continually attempt to steal from you the proper motive you should have for your giving.

Luke 4:5-7 reveals to us the selfishness of devilish giving, “Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, ‘All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.’”

Devilish giving is when you give expecting something in return from the person you gave it to. It's when you say, "I'll scratch your back if you'll scratch mine" (see Luke 6:30-36). The devil was bribing Jesus, and by manipulation, was trying to get something back from Him. Those who give this way have minds that have been blinded by the god of this age and will live a life of deception and destruction.

2 Cor. 4:4 ^{MSG} gives a description of those who submit to devilish giving, "All they have eyes for is the fashionable god of darkness. They think he can give them what they want, and that they won't have to bother believing a Truth they can't see. They're stone-blind to the day-spring brightness of the Message that shines with Christ, Who gives us the best picture of God we'll ever get."

The picture Jesus painted was of a loving and freely giving Father and when His example is followed we'll overcome every attempt of the devil to get us to do otherwise.

1 John 3:14 says, "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death." When you lay down your life for the brethren sacrifices are made. You must give up something in order to walk in love.

We live in a selfish world and the needs of other people aren't even noticed anymore. People are too busy thinking only of themselves and spend too much time on their jobs, hobbies, and the pursuit of worldly pleasures. The devil is a master of preoccupation and if you'll let him he'll consume all your time thus preventing you from having the time and resources to bless others.

Selfishness is a work of the flesh and Paul writes in Gal. 5:19-21,

"It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time:

- Repetitive, loveless, cheap sex;
- A stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage;
- Frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness;
- Trinket gods; magic-show religion;
- Paranoid loneliness;
- Cut-throat competition;
- All-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants;
- A brutal temper;
- An impotence to love or be loved;
- Divided homes and divided lives;

***Giving is not what you do,
it's what you are!***

- Small-minded and lopsided pursuits;
- The vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival;

- Uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions;
- Ugly parodies of community.

I could go on."

Love, on the other hand, freely gives and this is what separates devilish giving from Godly giving. The word "give" is in the Bible some 2,000 times and giving is the greatest expression of love there is. Giving is not what you do, it's what you are! God is love, and love gives. Paul wrote, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." Gal. 2:20a

Jesus freely gave Himself to you and now you must give yourself to somebody else.

Don't do this mournfully and act like it's a burden to you. Giving brings joy, so put a smile on your face and help somebody cheerfully and willingly. Jesus said in John 13:17, "If you know these things, happy are you if you do them."

The joy of the Lord is your strength ^{Neh. 8:10} and sadness makes you weak. If all you do is think of yourself you'll be sad and weak all the time, and it's a bad witness to the world for a believer to be depressed.

Remember, the world is watching you. If you help others you'll be stronger, happier, and more blessed than if you did something for yourself. We all have limits on our time, money, and resources and what you spend on yourself you can't spend on somebody else. It's a choice you'll have to make.

If you live only for yourself you'll lose your life and it will slip away like sand flowing through your fingers. Jesus endured the cross for the joy that was set before Him. He let Himself be sacrificed and we have to have the same mind-set.

And when we, like Jesus, put others first we also will have joy unspeakable.

Remember, the world is watching you.

CHAPTER TWO

LOVED BY LOVE

Jesus was a master story teller. The method of teaching adopted by Jesus was that of painting a parabolic picture for the people allowing it to tell its' own story. He was never without a parable when He spoke and like a skilled potter would mold and shape His messages to fit the experience and maturity of His listeners.

These parables bore the stamp of originality and were given to influence the thoughts, words, actions, and purposes of all who listened. Later, when He was alone with His disciples, He would go over everything and give them a full explanation of the truth He was attempting to convey.

Since many in His audience were farmers Jesus would often speak in their language, for many could

grasp the concept of seedtime and harvest. One such story is "The Parable of the Growing Seed" and is found in Mark 4:26-29. Of the Four Gospels, this story is given by Mark alone and is one of the three parables which reveal the mysteries of the kingdom of God in terms of a sowers' work.

Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come." Mark 4:26-29

GOD IS SEQUENTIAL

Much can be learned by a careful study of the aforementioned parable and one of the foremost truths revealed is that our God is a God of order.

One only has to look at a farmers' field to catch a glimpse of how God does things. First comes the blade, then the head, and after that the full grain in the head. God is sequence-minded and He never puts the cart before the horse.

In the book of Genesis we read that the heavens and the earth were created in an orderly fashion. God had a plan for the first day of creation, then the second day, the third, and so forth.

You are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Consider everything the high priests in the Old Testament had to do before they

entered the Holy of Holies. They couldn't just waltz into the presence of God unannounced. No, cleansings had to be performed and offerings had to be made (see Lev. 16). With much fear and trembling this was done in an orderly fashion and in a God-ordained sequence. If the proper order was not followed to the letter it would mean the end of their life. A rope was tied to the ankle of the High Priest so he could be pulled out from behind the veil in case he didn't follow the prescribed sequence and dropped over dead. God is not the author of confusion ¹ Cor. 14:33 and to Him sequence is a serious matter, and so should it be for us.

Paul writes, "Let all things be done decently and in order" ¹ Cor. 14:40. People who wake up, get dressed, and go to work do so in an orderly

manner. But the person who wakes up, goes to work, and then gets dressed, is on their way to having a very bad day. Without a doubt, a proper sequence is most important in everything we do.

For example, sex before marriage is an action taken out of a proper, God-ordained sequence and many lives have been destroyed as a result thereof.

To get your needs met there is a sequence to be followed. Matt. 6:33 tells us, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." There is a sequence to be followed when it comes to our relationship with God and our war against the devil.

James 4:7 says, "Therefore submit to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you." It is foolish to try to resist the devil without first submitting yourself to God.

The seven sons of Sceva tried to do this and Acts 19:15,16 tells us what

happened to them, "And the evil spirit answered and said, 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?' Then the man in whom the evil spirit lived leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded."

James goes on to say in v.8, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded."

LOVE GOD - LOVE YOURSELF - LOVE MANKIND

God's foremost command is for each of us to love and serve one another. You were born to love and called to serve and in our relationships with other people there is a proper order to do

things. Paul also used the language of a farmer when he wrote in 1 Cor. 3:6, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase." The Message Bible says, "We each carried out our servant assignment. I planted the seed, Apollos watered the plants, but God made you grow." Again, a prescribed sequence was followed thus allowing God to give life to the seed that was sown.

In Lev. 19, God gave Moses the laws of social order and said in v.18, "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord." Jesus quoted this command to love your neighbor as you love yourself in Mark 12:31, as did Paul in Rom. 13:9.

THE PROPER SEQUENCE HERE IS...

Submit to God, resist the devil, and he will flee.

...you must first love yourself before you can love your neighbor. You must become your own best friend and rejoice in the

person God made you to be. You are a one of a kind original and there is nobody on this planet quite like you. Because of the cross you have been made the righteousness of God in Christ ^{2 Cor. 5:21} and Paul says in Rom. 8:16,17a, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ..."

The Message Bible says, "This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike 'What's next, Papa?' God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we are: Father and children. And we know we are going to get what's coming to us - an unbelievable inheritance."

Jesus said a great deal about love but none was more important as what He said in John 13:34, “**A new commandment I give you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.**”

Before you can love yourself or your neighbor you must have a divine revelation that God loves you. Then and only then can the love command be fulfilled in your life. Jesus prayed in John 17:23b, “**that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.**”

HE IS FAITHFUL

It takes faith to believe that the Heavenly Father loves you as much as He loves Jesus. Your mind cannot comprehend this much love. Your mind will tell you this is not so because Jesus never sinned, never rebelled, was never disobedient, and never displeased the Father. When Jesus was baptized “suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’” ^{Matt. 3:17}. Your mind will try to convince you that there is no way the Father can love you as much as He loves Jesus. But He does. In fact, He loves you so much that He sent Jesus to die for you ^{John 3:16}.

Your mind is limited in its capacity to believe such profound truths such as this, so don't try to reason it all out. Just believe it by faith. Faith is a choice and does not require understanding. You can believe anything the Bible tells you if you would only choose to do so.

It's not enough to just believe in God and that He exists. You have to believe that He loves you. James 2:19 says, “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe - and tremble.” The Message[®] Bible puts it this way, “Do I hear you professing to believe in the

one and only God, but then observe you complacently sitting back as if you had done something wonderful? That's just great. Demons do that, but what good does it do them? Use your heads!”

Faith comes by hearing ^{Rom. 10:17} so you need to hear yourself say every day, “God loves me!” Say it again, “God loves me!” Once more, “God loves me!” You need to meditate on this day and night. You need to confess it, sing about it, read about it, and hear good preaching about it. There is no life as exciting as the victorious life that comes from knowing God loves you. His great love has delivered you from the guilt of sin and the shame of your failures and mistakes. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; old things have passed away; behold, all things become new” ^{2 Cor. 5:17}. God remembers your sin no more ^{Jer. 31:34} and if you confess your

sins He is faithful and just to forgive you and cleanse you from all unrighteousness ^{1 John 1:9}. If you're forgiven, you're forgiven. If

you're cleansed, you're cleansed. There is no condemnation in Christ ^{Rom.8:1} and we have no fear of judgment and punishment. Indeed, He is the glory and the lifter of your head ^{Ps. 3:3}.

Faith is a choice and does not require understanding.

WHO ARE YOU?

John writes, “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him” ^{1 John 4:15,16}.

There is a difference between *knowing* God loves you and *believing* that He does. Divine revelation is needed for you to be fully developed in knowing the love God has for you.

John called himself “that disciple whom

Jesus loved” ^{John 21:7} and this should be your confession as well.

Who are you? You’re the one God loves. God is love and He loves you. You can’t be any more loved than when you are *loved by Love*. God said in Jer. 31:3, “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with loving-kindness I have drawn you.” God is drawing you into a love relationship with Him. He enjoys loving you and he delights in blessing you and showing you mercy.

He is thinking about you today and He’s got a plan for your life (see Jer. 29:11). He’ll lead you and guide you in the way you should go and He’ll never leave you or forsake you. He cares so much about you that He keeps count of the number of hairs on your head. His eyes roam to and fro across the earth looking for someone to show Himself strong on their behalf.

Jesus said, “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father, I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you...” ^{John 15:15,16a}

Your claim to fame is that you are loved by God, and it is an insult to Him when you don’t know and believe that. One day Jesus and His disciples were in a boat crossing over to the other side of the sea. “And a great wind-storm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, ‘Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?’” ^{Mark 4:37,38}

These disciples questioned whether or not Jesus loved them and fear gripped their heart. After rebuking the storm and a great calm fell upon the water Jesus turned to His disciples and

“said to them, ‘Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?’ And they feared exceedingly...” ^{Mark 4:40,41a}

One way to know if you truly believe God loves you is whether or not there is fear in your life. If you fear you won’t be able to pay your bills this month then you’re not fully convinced in your heart that God loves you. If cancer runs in your family and you fear that one day you’ll catch this dreaded disease, then you are not totally persuaded that God loves you as much as He loves Jesus.

But if you’re walking in love you’ll have no fear. 1 John 4:18 says, “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.”

THE KEY

Faith works by knowing how much God loves you. Faith works through love ^{Gal. 5:6} and this is the key

to your victory in life and for overcoming the trials that come your way. Heb. 11:6 tells us, “But without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” The Message[®] Bible says, “It’s impossible to please God apart from faith. And why? Because anyone who wants to approach God must believe both that He exists and that He cares enough to respond to those who seek Him.”

Faith is a choice. You chose to believe in the goodness of God, that He is, and that He will reward you if you seek Him diligently. David wrote in Ps. 27:13, “I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.” Faith is activated *and* works by love, *and* it’s this perfect

Faith is activated and works by love.

love that will cast fear out of your life. The word “cast” means ‘to throw out not caring where it lands.’ Without fear in your life you won’t be afraid of the devil, people, death, car crashes, cancer, or of losing your job.

Paul wrote in 2 Tim. 1:7, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” When you’re fearless, you’re a problem to the devil because he can’t scare you. Rom. 8:37 says you “are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” Gods’ love gives you the victory every time. Paul writes, “Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ” ^{2 Cor. 2:14}.

The closer you walk with God the more He’ll manifest His love in your life. Just walk outside and look around and you’ll see the goodness of God fully displayed.

All that you see He made for you. He made the sun and the moon and all the planets so that the earth could be here and He made the earth so that you could be here. He made it all for you.

That magnificent mountain range is for you,

As is that beautiful rainbow;

And the green grass that grows near your home;

The reason the sun shines by day and the moon by night is for you;

The reason the ocean rolls onto the sand is for you;

The stars twinkle at night and the wind blows;

And the trees sprout their leaves, all for you;

The flowers bloom across the fields,

And the birds sing their beautiful harmonies for you.

All these things say with a loud voice, “God loves you!!” Every meal you eat God is saying “I love you!” Every breath you take and every time your heart beats God is saying “I love you!”

Rom. 8:31,32 says, “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”

The birth of Jesus said to the world, “God loves you!!” and if He gave you Jesus, He’ll heal your body and give you a sound mind. He’ll give you a nice house to live in and a car, a job, and a family. He’ll help you comb your hair in the morning and He’ll help you drive to work each day.

God can give no greater gift than His love.

He is the living God “who gives us richly all things to enjoy” ^{1 Tim. 6:17b}. All things are yours because of the

great love He has for you. It is because of His unfailing and never-ending love that you have been crowned with glory and honor ^{Ps. 8:5b}.

Never doubt the love of God. When you do, you doubt God for He is love. Every day you’re alive He demonstrates His love for you beyond question. John writes, “In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him” ^{1 John 4:19}. He could give no greater gift.

He loved us while we were His enemies and not for what we were doing for Him. He does not have to do one more thing to prove that He loves you. He’s already done it.

Paul asks, “Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation, or distress, or

persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Rom. 8:35. He answers his own question in vv. 38,39, "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The Message[®] Bible says, "I'm absolutely convinced that nothing - nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable - absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love because of the way Jesus our Master has embraced us."

As Jesus hung and bled on the cross, the Father was showing you how much He loves you. The cross is a picture of love, it's what love looks like. Jesus paid the highest price that could ever be paid. And He did it all for you.

1 John 3:1a says, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" The word "behold" means 'look.' Look how much the Father loves you!

You are an amazing, one of a kind, child of the living God! He bought you with a price and you are most valuable to Him. You are the apple of His eye Zech. 2:8 and you can have boldness on the Day of Judgment because the One sitting on the throne loves you. You are loved by Love and God is not quiet about how much He loves you. He wants the whole world to know it.

Jesus said in John 17:22,23, "**And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.**"

In the book of Revelation Jesus told John to write these profound words to the church in Philadelphia, "**Indeed, I will make these of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie - indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you**" Rev. 3:9. Imagine that. The enemy will be brought to your feet and shown that God loves you. The Message[®] Bible states it like this, "**And watch as I take those who call themselves true believers but are nothing of the kind, pretenders whose true membership is in the club of Satan - watch as I strip off their pretensions and they're forced to acknowledge it's you I've loved.**"

GOD'S GOOD NEWS

God wants the whole world to know that he is the God of love and that He loves you.

Go public and tell people everything that God has done for you. Love your neighbor and tell them: if you draw near to God, he'll

draw near to you.

If you seek Him with your whole heart He'll be found by you.

If you'll ask, you'll receive.

If you knock, it will be opened unto you.

He is a good God and when you reach out to Him, He will respond back to you. If you believe in the love and mercy of God you can enjoy your life even knowing you've sinned and come short of the glory of God. Mercy means you don't get the punishment you deserve but rather get the blessings you don't deserve. All this and more because God loves you so much that He gave you Jesus.

You are loved by Love and God's grace will pardon and cleanse you and make you whole. 1 John 4:10,11 tells us, "In this is love, not that

*Love yourself, and then
love your neighbor.*

we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation (the satisfaction) for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

Herein is the threefold sequence of fulfilling Gods’ command to walk in love:

1. God loves you,
2. You love yourself, and then
3. You love your neighbor.

Loving other people is the stamp of approval that you have been born again and believe that you are loved by Love. John writes, “We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death”^{1 John 4:14}.

John, the apostle of love, the one who openly confessed that he was loved by Jesus, tells us in 1 John 3:11, “For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.”

He went on to say in vv. 16-24^{MSG}, “This is how we’ve come to understand and experience love: Christ sacrificed His life for us. This is why we ought to live sacrificially for our fellow believers, and not just be out for ourselves. If you see some brother or sister in need and have the means to do something about it but turn a cold shoulder and do nothing, what happens to God’s love? It disappears. And you make it disappear.

My dear children, let’s not just talk about love; let’s practice real love. This is the only way we’ll know we’re living truly, living in God’s reality. It’s also the way to shut down debilitating self-criticism, even when there is something to it. For God is greater than our worried hearts and knows more about us than we do ourselves. And friends, once that’s taken care of and we’re no longer accusing or condemning ourselves,

we’re bold and free before God! We’re able to stretch our hands out and receive what we asked for because we’re doing what He said, doing what pleases Him.

Again, this is Gods’ command: to believe in His personally named Son, Jesus Christ. He told us to love each other, in line with the original command. As we keep His commands, we live deeply and surely in Him, and He lives in us. And this is how we experience His deep and abiding presence in us: by the Spirit He gave us.”

Without question, God loves you. You are loved by Love and by faith you believe that and love Him back. Now, when the shouting subsides, go out and be a blessing to someone else. It’s what He paid the ultimate price for you to do.

*Let’s practice
real love.*

CHAPTER THREE

YOUR OWN BEST FRIEND

The time drew near for Jesus to fulfill His calling and purpose for coming to planet Earth. Within a few short hours He would be beaten, ridiculed, spat upon, and shamefully hung naked on a cross between two thieves. In the upper room during the last supper Jesus prayed these words, “**I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be one in Us...**” John 17:20,21a.

Jesus came to bridge the gap of sin that separated us from the Father and to bring unity amongst ourselves. He came with the purpose of turning all people everywhere into one, big, happy family.

He said, “**I am the vine, you are the branches**” John 15:5

and together as joint heirs with Jesus we are to become “like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” Phil. 2:2.

The Message[®] Bible says, “Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends.” This is called the *law of unity* and without it a plundering will take place within the body of Christ causing much division and pain. Jesus Himself said, “**Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand**” Matt. 12:25. Clearly, unity should be the goal of every born-again believer. Our very existence depends on it.

David wrote in Ps. 133:1, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” What this means is that we

are to have a continual courtship with one another.

When we are courting somebody in the natural we are always on our best behavior and will do anything to win their affection and approval. We need to delight to be in the presence of one another and strive to promote and further each other’s welfare and calling in life.

Paul says, “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” Phil. 2:4. We are joined together in a covenant relationship because of the shed blood of Jesus and the bonding element that holds us together is love, the “bond of perfection” Col. 3:14.

Heb. 13:1-3 states, “Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels. Remember the prisoners as if chained with them, and those who are mistreated, since you yourselves are in the body also.”

Remember the prisoners as if chained with them, and those who are mistreated, since you yourselves are in the body also.”

Jesus came to bridge the gap of sin.

GOD’S LOVE IS NOT ORDINARY

The love of God is no ordinary love. It is a love that continues to love no matter what. The love of God will always focus on the one loved with thoughts of self *secondary*. Jude 21 says to “keep yourselves in the love of God.” If we do this, the body of Christ will be undivided because the love of God always seeks and desires unity.

It is God’s desire that we dwell together as a family having one heart, one soul, and one in-

terest. Ps. 133:2 says dwelling together in unity “is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the edge of his garments.” This ointment was holy and was not made for common use. So must our brotherly love be. To dwell together in unity we must love with a pure heart that is solely devoted to God and the fulfillment of His will.

As with the oil, holy love is also of great price and is precious indeed. It is like ointment and perfume that will rejoice the heart. It is the “oil of gladness” that brings exaltation, celebration, and exceeding joy.

If we will take the time to develop a love relationship with one another then dwelling together in unity will be “like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion” Ps. 133:3. The morning dew represents fertility and growth. Love will grow when hospitality and brotherly kindness is practiced on one another.

Pleasant in its manifestation, love can span all gulfs and distances and can bind together all things that seem to be apart. For sure, love is the solution to every problem and it is through love that unity comes to the body of Christ. This being so, walking in love should be the ultimate goal of every born-again believer. Before that can happen, however, the Bible tells us that the prerequisite to loving others is to first love yourself.

LOVING YOURSELF

Loving yourself is not vanity or pride. It's God's plan and will for your life. Jesus considers it of the utmost importance, so much so that He commands us to do it. Matt. 22:35-39 says, “Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?’ Jesus

said to him, ‘**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**’”

Jesus put loving yourself into the same category as loving God because, if you don't love yourself and have a healthy respect for who you are in Christ, you will never be able to properly love other people. Many people struggle with this and have a civil war raging on the inside of themselves, because they don't understand you can't give away what you don't have. If you don't love yourself, you're not going to be able to love other people.

Too many people in the world don't like themselves and are not at peace with who they are. They feel like they don't measure up to the standards set up by the world around them and their self-esteem is based on the bad things

The prerequisite to loving others is to first love yourself.

other people have said to them. Somebody said this and somebody said that. Their lives are being controlled by what somebody said and most of the time they don't even know who that somebody is.

The Bible refers to the enemy as “the accuser of the brethren” Rev. 12:10 and he'll use other people to point out all your faults and shortcomings. Nobody is perfect, especially those who continually point their finger at you and tell you how bad you are. We've all sinned, failed, and fallen short of the glory of God Rom. 3:23. Even the apostle Paul wrote, “For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” Rom. 7:19,24.

Too often ones' self-worth is determined by how other people feel about them. They fall into the abyss of despair and condemnation if

others have negative feelings about them. They become addicted to the approval of others and fall prey to their opinions, words, and actions. This has caused lives and relationships to be destroyed and have led many to commit the selfish, diabolical act of suicide. These people refuse to love themselves unless others love them first. They forget that God loved us while we were yet sinners, so much so that He sent His only Son to die for us. How much more love and approval do these people need?

Scripture tells us to “put on the breastplate of Gods’ approval” ^{Eph. 6:14}. This piece of armor covers your heart, the center of your being, the way you feel about yourself deep inside. It is in your heart that you receive God’s forgiveness, *and* His mercy that endures forever, *and* His love that never fails.

The truth is, people who speak negatively of you only do so because they don’t love themselves. They reason in their subconscious that if you’re such a flawed individual, then they aren’t so bad after all. By making you look bad, they in turn feel good about who they are. And yes, their words may sting like piercing arrows, because much of what they say may be true. The good news is that your value is not based on what other people say about you, but is based solely on the fact that you are a child of the Most High God.

IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

Paul says in Eph. 2:10a, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus...” You are not a finished product yet. You are a work in process and throughout your life God is continually molding and shaping you into the person He wants you to be. He is the potter and you are the clay. You’re on the potters’ wheel of grace,

mercy, and love.

Paul tells us in Phil. 1:6 that we can be “confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.” You may not be where you should be, but thank God you’re not where you used to be. We go from glory to glory as we are daily being transformed into the very image of God ^{2 Cor. 3:18}.

The Message® Bible says, “And so we are transfigured much like the Messiah, our lives gradually becoming brighter and brighter and more beautiful as God enters our lives and we become like Him.”

Your self-image is a picture of yourself that you carry in your heart. You need to love yourself in a healthy way and see yourself the way God sees you.

You’re a new creation in Christ and all your sins have been washed away.

You are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus ^{2 Cor.}

^{5:21} *and you’ve been set apart and chosen to be an ambassador for Christ* ^{v. 20}.

You are fearfully and wonderfully made ^{Ps. 139:13,14} *and God put you together precisely as He wanted.*

He perfectly, genetically, and distinctly formed you in your mothers’ womb and caused you to become the person you are today.

You are so special that God counts the hairs on your head.

You are distinguished, marked, and unique.

There is no one quite like you in all the earth. Never has been, never will be.

It was Gods’ purpose and plan for you to have your personality, gender, and nationality.

You are fearfully and wonderfully made.

He chose the color of your hair and the color of your eyes and He chose how tall you would be. He caused you to be born at this particular time in history. He created everything about you.

You are who you are- because of Him. And like He did in the beginning when He created the heavens and the earth, God looks at you and says, "It is good!" God created you to feel good about yourself. He created you to feel complete, to feel whole, to feel confident and secure. Look inside your heart and see your true value and worth.

BE YOUR OWN BFF (*Best Friend Forever*)

Love your life and don't ever minimize who God made you to be. You're someone special and you need to daily celebrate yourself and who you are in Christ. Love your life and be filled with passion and zeal.

Do something special for yourself today. Throw a party for yourself and have a big celebration. Don't expect life to be exciting, but you be exciting. Life is what you make it and if you have holy fervor and zeal, then your life will be exciting. It starts from the inside out so love yourself and love your life. Become your own best friend.

By far, one of the most important and beneficial things you can ever do for yourself is to learn how to love yourself in a proper way. You have probably said "I love you" countless times to your loved ones, but how many times have you said this to yourself?

The first step to loving yourself is to stand in front of the mirror, look yourself in the eye, and say loud and clear, "I love you!" Jesus told us to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind. Your emotions are a part of your soul, so get emotional in your love for God. Clap your hands, stomp your feet, jump in the air, and shout prais-

es to your King.

At the same time, get emotional and express yourself in your love for your neighbor and most importantly in your love for yourself. Be happy for who you are and for the person God made you to be. Don't desire to be somebody else, but joyfully be content and satisfied with how the Lord put you together. After all, God doesn't make junk.

How many times have you looked at your friends and relatives and loved them exactly as they are? You then turn and look at yourself in the mirror and hate what you see. This is not how God wants you to be. You are not supposed to have negative feelings about yourself, and people who do not love themselves are emotionally handicapped. If you don't get along with yourself, you're not going to get along with anybody else.

*Don't expect life to be exciting,
but you be exciting.*

BECOME A HEALTHIER YOU

The greatest gift you can give to the world is a healthy you. You need to be spiritually healthy, physically healthy, and emotionally healthy.

Many churches tell their congregations what wretched sinners they are. Religious spirits will always make you feel guilty and bad about yourself. When the people leave the church service they feel worse than before they went in. People shouldn't leave the church feeling like a rat and a bum who won't ever amount to anything. No, God's perfect will is for people to know that their value and worth is rooted in Christ and Him alone. It is not based on your achievements or where you live or how much money you have. Neither is it based on what you know, who you know, or how many college degrees you have. It's all based on who you are in Christ.

Col. 2:9,10 says, "For in Him dwells all

the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and you are complete in Him Who is the head of all principality and power.” The Amplified Bible says, “You are made full in Him” and the word “complete” means ‘to be satisfied, finished, perfected, filled up, assured (confident, secure, knowing who you are).’

Too many people are still seeking to be loved by others. If you know God loves you, and you love yourself, then being loved by others won't be on the forefront of your mind. Instead, you'll have the freedom to step out of yourself and seek to love others and be a blessing to them.

A good, healthy self-esteem will make you amazingly happy, well adjusted, and will give you the determination to go further in life than what others think possible. People who love themselves in the right way are in touch with their God-given dreams and aspirations. They believe they have something to offer the world and are more likely to make a positive difference in the lives of other people.

LOVING YOURSELF IS IMPORTANT

Still, some religious authors condemn the whole concept of loving yourself. They think it is being self-centered and arrogant. They don't seem to realize that there is a way to love yourself without worshipping your-self. See loving yourself as recognizing and rejoicing in God's view of your worth. If you love the person God made you to be, then you can value and respect other people. Look into the mirror of God's love and grace and see your reflection in Calvary's price tag.

Let's be honest here. Self-love is a horse that you can fall off either side of. You can love

yourself too much to the point of arrogance or you love yourself not enough to the point where you hate yourself. There is such a twisted perception in the world regarding one's self-worth that most Christians don't even know how to love themselves. This is why they fall into the trap of always seeking to win the approval of other people.

Loving yourself is important, so much so that Jesus included it in the two greatest commandments. It's easy to see by the Lord's command to “**love your neighbor as you love yourself**” Matthew 19:19; 22:39 that we must make loving ourselves a top priority in our lives. As you do, always stay connected to God, because loving yourself is one area where, if you're not careful you can really get out of balance on.

Many people go to one extreme or the other. In the self-centered society in which we now live,

*Seek to love others
and be a blessing.*

many have gone to the extreme by being concerned about their own personal well-being and their own agendas to the exclusion

of everyone else. All some people think about is “me, myself, and I.” The world totally revolves around them and their own personal goals and desires. These people will do anything and everything to constantly get their own way. These types of people are incapable of bonding with or loving anyone but themselves.

Love that is selfish and self-centered is totally opposite from the sacrificial, self-giving love God wants all of us to have. But when we comprehend God's love, when we become His friend and deeply know that He loves us, we won't need to focus all our attention on loving ourselves.

The more we experience God's love for us, the more we'll think of Him and our neighbor and the less we'll think of ourselves. You can be

sure you're loving yourself in the right way when you start to love others more as a result of how you feel about yourself.

When you make loving others your goal, everything else will automatically fall into place. Life and everything in it just makes sense. Confusion is thrown out the door. You can have the confidence that God will always be there to help keep you in balance with the way you love yourself.

You will, however, have to stay on top of your game, always making sure that you don't get too full of yourself and start sliding down to the extreme of becoming too self-centered. Don't ever let your guard down.

The command to love your neighbor as you love yourself is essentially saying *treat other people as well as you treat yourself*. The Bible presumes that people already love themselves too much, and that is the problem. Jesus gave us the command so that we'll take our eyes off of ourselves and start to care for others.

Someone once wrote, "*Loving yourself makes you a vessel for the aroma of God's grace. The fragrance of your self-worth perfumes many lives, including your own.*"

Most relationship problems come as a result of not loving yourself. Remember, if you don't love yourself, you won't be able to properly love other people.

We are commanded to love and have relationships with God and people but at the same time we need to also have a positive relationship with ourselves. Let's face it, you can never get away from yourself. Wherever you go, there you are. So if you don't love yourself, you are going to have one miserable, wretched life.

ATTITUDE IS ALTITUDE, UP OR DOWN

Your attitude about yourself determines whether or not you will live and enjoy a good life. It's easy in a success driven world to come to a point where you believe you just don't measure up. Don't ever compare yourself to other people and stop trying to be like them. There will always be somebody whose grass is greener than your own.

Instead, be who you are and the person God made you to be. You're talented, you're creative, you're "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" ^{Eph. 6:10}. Be positive and rise higher to a new level of confidence, a new level of boldness. Your future is bright and the best is yet to come. God sees you as a champion. He sees you as His very own masterpiece. He regards you as a strong, courageous, successful, and overcoming person. An angel appeared to Gideon and said, "The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor" ^{Judges 6:12}. The Amplified[®] Bible calls him, "You mighty man of fearless courage."

When you fail, forgive yourself and go on.

Always see yourself as a priceless treasure in the eyes of God. He believes in you even more than you believe in yourself. Develop a healthy self-image based on what God's Word says about you and not on where you live, what style of car you drive, or what other people say about you.

Remember, you will never rise above the image you have of yourself in your own mind.

As God helps you grow you will change, but you will always be you. Your uniqueness is God-designed and He did not create you to be somebody else. Every day strive to become God's best version of who you are.

HOW-TO-LOVE YOURSELF

How does a person love themselves in a good, healthy way? First, stop criticizing yourself. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue," ^{Prov. 18:21} and if you always belittle yourself, then little is all you'll ever be. People believe what they hear themselves say, so put a guard over your mouth.

To love yourself like God does, you must see yourself as Jesus sees you. We all have strengths and weaknesses and you need to react to your shortcomings the same way Jesus would.

When you fail, forgive yourself and go on. It's that simple. Ps. 103:11,12 says, "For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

God loves you so much that He extends mercy and casts away all your transgressions. If we would embrace His mercy and take our eyes off of our transgressions as He has, we would love ourselves far more than we ever thought possible. And don't ever forget Rom. 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."

The Parable of the Prodigal Son is the only place in scripture where the Bible pictures God running ^{Luke 15:20}. To whom was He running? To a person who made grievous mistakes and failed miserably. Nothing you've done is too much for the mercy of God, and the moment you take one step toward God, your loving Father will come running to you. You are His prized possession and He'll welcome you with arms open wide.

Nothing you've ever done, or ever will do,

can separate you from the love of God and His desire to be a blessing to you.

THROUGH GOD'S EYES

Become your own best friend. Love, trust, and respect yourself. See yourself through the eyes of compassion the way you would a friend. Accept yourself for who you are and don't judge yourself so harshly.

Understand that self-love must come from you. Others cannot affirm or love you the way you can, so stop looking to other people to do what only you can do yourself. Treat yourself well and find ways to prosper yourself and replenish your soul.

Start with your physical appearance. If you look good, you'll feel good. Wear what you like and what you are comfortable in. It's not necessary to blindly follow the latest trend even if it

God commands us to love ourselves, so act like it.

doesn't suit your tastes and desires. Don't wear what you don't like just to keep yourself in tract with what others are wearing. No,

wear what pleases you.

Give attention to yourself and never neglect what matters most to you. Take time to look after yourself, to groom yourself and to take care of your well-being.

Love always starts within. You are a child of the King of kings and Lord of lords, so start treating yourself like royalty. Get rid of those used dishes you use all the time and start using the best china that's collecting dust in the cabinet. Buy yourself that new fishing pole or that fancy pair of shoes you've been looking at the past few months. Pamper yourself and bless yourself on purpose. God commands us to love ourselves, so act like it.

GOD LOVES YOU AS YOU ARE

It's okay to love yourself while God is in the process of changing you into His image. Nobody is perfect and God has already approved of and accepted you just as you are. Get in agreement with God and start feeling good about who you are. You are royalty so start speaking positive things about yourself. Say "I can" and "I will."

There is nothing you can't do, so talk to yourself and say,

"Greater is He who is in me than he who is in the world.

I'm the head and not the tail.

I'm above and not beneath.

I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.

I will come behind in no good thing because God loves me and I love myself."

If you will focus on how much God loves you and the price He paid to redeem you, you'll come to see yourself as God sees you. That will help you understand just how much you're really worth as a child of the Most High God.

Too often self-worth is based on what other people tell you about yourself. However, the One, True Authority on our self-worth is Jesus, and since He gave His own life up for you by dying on a cross, then that should tell you how valuable you really are.

Start today. Make a quality decision to do yourself a favor and love yourself.

God loves you so you can love yourself.

God accepts you so you can accept yourself.

God cherishes you so you can cherish yourself.

Seeing yourself as God sees you is what it

means to have a good self-image. It also means that you will live a long, good, happy, and prosperous life. So love yourself and become your own best friend.

Do it today.

God loves you, accepts you, and cherishes you.

CHAPTER FOUR

YOUR BROTHER'S KEEPER

The world as we know it today exists, because people sought for answers to questions brave enough to be asked.

“What lies beyond the horizon? What’s it like on the ocean floor? Can a man fly? Is there a cure for polio? How can we land a man on the moon and return him safely back to the earth? Can we predict the weather? Is it possible for a man to travel faster than the speed of sound? Is there life on other planets? Can a computer be made to fit in the palm of your hand?”

If a question could be asked, then an answer had to be found. That’s just how human nature is, and it was the pursuit of all these answers that caused man to seek God and reach down deep inside himself in order to create a world that nobody in times past ever dreamed could ever exist.

The Bible says knowledge will increase in the last days ^{Dan. 12:4} and indeed it has, all because of questions asked and people with enough faith, courage, and perseverance to seek for the answers.

For those who have been born-again and gained the privilege of being called the children of God, the Bible is a book of questions and answers.

It is interesting to note that the first question ever asked by a man was made by one who had just murdered his own brother. Gen. 4:8,9 says, “Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up and killed him. Then the Lord

said to Cain, ‘Where is Abel your brother?’ And he said, ‘I do not know. Am I my brothers’ keeper?’”

Along with “What must I do to get saved?” ^{Acts 16:30} this inquiry by Cain ranks as one of the most important questions asked in all of scripture. The reason this question is so profound is because your answer to it will determine what happens to your life in the here and now as well as your eternal destiny in the age to come.

Cain did not realize the significance of what he asked. He was being rude, obnoxious, and tried to avoid the admittance of guilt that he had just killed his brother.

*Am I my brother's
keeper?*

His words have come to symbolize peoples’ unwillingness to accept responsibility for their own actions

and for the welfare of their fellow man. Still, this question imposes a relevance for all born-again believers and must be answered by all: “Am I my brothers’ keeper?” Your quest to find the answer to this question should not be a long one, because the entire Bible is a book about love, and clearly teaches us that we indeed do have a responsibility to care and watch out for one another.

Paul wrote in 1 Thess. 4:9,10, “But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more.”

The Message[®] Bible tells us, “Regarding

life together and getting along with each other, you don't need me to tell you what to do. You're God-taught in these matters. Just love one another! You're already good at it; your friends all over the province of Macedonia are the evidence. Keep it up; get better and better at it."

John, the apostle of love, tells us in 1 John 1:3, "that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." In Greek the word for "fellowship" is *koinonia* and it is the highest degree of love two people can generate toward one another. The word means "fellowship, partnership, social intercourse, companion, communion, partaker."

John later goes on to say, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love"

1 John 4:7,8

You can be born-again and know very little about God. When you get saved you meet God and get acquainted with Him, but that doesn't mean you know Him. If you don't know love, you don't know God. Love is not something God has, it's what He is. God is love! If you don't see things through the love perspective, you don't see it as God sees it. God sees everything through the eyes of love.

The agape love of God is a fruit of the spirit and is the most powerful, the most dynamic, and the most dominate force in the world. Knowing God and His love will put you on a higher plane of living, higher than the plane you attained when you got born-again. This love is not selfish, but carries with it the overwhelming desire to be a blessing to somebody else.

Gods' love will always manifest itself with actions that line up with His Word and gives for the purpose of blessing the recipient. Paul writes these encouraging words in 1 Cor. 16:14, "Let all that you do be done with love."

THE COVENANT THE WORLD HUNGERS FOR

The world today is craving for love like never before. We all have within us the need to love and be loved. Inwardly our hearts are yearning for the acceptance that only a covenant relationship can bring. The story of David and Jonathan is but one example in the Bible of what the love of God is all about.

1 Sam. 18:1,3,4 says, "And it was so, when he had finished speaking to Saul that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan and David cut a covenant because he loved him as his own soul.

And Jonathan took off the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword

and his bow and his belt."

Nobody had more reason to dislike David than Jonathan. Because he was Saul's son, Jonathan was next in line to be king. David, however, was anointed by God through Samuel to be the next heir to the throne, but still Jonathan cut a covenant with him.

Jonathan's rival to the throne now became his closest friend. Their mutual love and affection was sincere and in 1 Sam. 20:4 Jonathan told his close friend with whom he was now bonded, "Whatever you yourself desire, I will do it for you." By giving David his robe and weapons, Jonathan proclaimed that all he had now belonged to the future king of Israel. David's enemies were now Jonathan's enemies and both vowed to fight their covenant partners' battles as if they were their own. Each had be-

*God sees everything
through the eyes of love.*

come their brothers' keeper.

A covenant is the most sacred thing that can exist between two people. It is an irrevocable, solemn and binding agreement between two or more parties in which each promises to perform certain deeds for the other. A blood covenant was often made between tribes, families, or individuals based on their needs, strengths, and weaknesses.

One tribe, for example, may be good at farming while another was skilled in the art of warfare. An agreement would be reached where the farmers would provide food for the warriors while the warriors would provide protection for the farmers. By making a covenant together they each filled in the gaps caused by the others' weaknesses.

THE BLOOD MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

A blood covenant is a union in which all assets, talents, debts, and liabilities

are held mutually. A blood covenant meant you were totally and forever giving yourself away to somebody else. Nothing could ever be yours alone again. All that you were, all that you had or ever would have, became the equal property of your covenant partner. The body of Christ desperately needs to become more covenant-minded. The central theme of this God-given bond is love and that we need one another.

Solomon wrote in Eccl. 4:9-12, "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone? Though one be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken."

The Blood Covenant was originated by God and not man. It started in the Garden of Eden when God slew the animals to clothe Adam and Eve after they sinned. In the Hebrew language the word for "covenant" means 'to cut flesh' or 'to make an incision.' When a covenant is 'cut', there is always a shedding of blood as a sign of the pledge between the two parties. Lev. 17:11 says, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood." No blood, no life.

In the Old Testament some covenants were made by cutting their thumbs, wrists, or palms and mixing their blood together. In fact, this is where the handshake came from. Today we are "made nigh by the blood of Christ" ^{Eph. 2:13}. Jesus shed His blood so we wouldn't have to shed ours, and we come into a covenant relationship with God through faith in that blood.

We need to realize that *The Blood Cove-*

nant is a very sacred thing even today, for it forms a bond between two people that creates a relationship that is stronger than normal

family ties. When the world observes this union that is centered around the love of God, they'll be drawn into a covenant relationship with Christ and other believers. Through the action of believers fulfilling their part of the covenant we have in the blood of Jesus, when you become your brothers' keeper, they'll see for themselves that the Lord came to give us life and give it more abundantly ^{John 10:10}.

The Body of Christ would be a haven of rest and protection for all the world if more of its' members had a David or a Jonathan in their lives. And where does one find such a friend? The first place to look is in the mirror. Don't waste your time waiting for somebody to come up and knock on your front door, because chances are it will never happen. Instead, make a commit-

Friendships just don't happen on their own.

ment to become a friend.

COVENANT RELATIONSHIPS

Friendships don't just happen on their own. They are planned and cultivated and it starts with you. It is common knowledge that good things don't just happen to people.

Life is what you make it and more times than not we are the ones who have to make good things happen. The same can be said about covenant relationships. Prov. 18:24 says, "A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." With Christ as your Lord and example prepare your heart to become a lifelong friend to another, to become part of a threefold cord that is not easily broken.

Love is what the world is looking for and love is what God and the Christian experience is all about. Take the first step and be willing to reach out and get involved with other people. Don't sit around and wait for someone to come and offer you their hand in friendship. You make the first move and begin by asking the Lord to place in your heart the name of a person who desperately needs a true friend in their life. For certain, there is at least one person out there who is urgently waiting to hear from you.

In Paul's last letter before his death he wrote about a true friend who was in his life. 2 Tim. 1:16-18 states, "The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chains; but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very diligently and found me. The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day - and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus."

Onesiphorus had ridden his donkey a long

distance to get to Rome, and in spite of being tired and weary, he searched hard for Paul until he found him. Love seeks to bless other people, and this same love will energize you and give you strength and endurance, because you're in the flow of what God desires. God can use you on a regular basis and if He puts somebody on your heart, don't make a feeble attempt to help them, do it diligently.

Don't sit around all day thinking only about yourself and about what you want and what you don't have. Don't murmur and complain about how other people don't love you and never come to visit you. This will steal your peace and joy and make you old before your time. Paul said "for all seek their own," Phil. 2:21 but the love of God will move you to seek another's benefit and well-being 1 Cor. 10:24. The Message® Bible says, "We want to live well, but our foremost efforts should be to help others live well."

*Show interest in others
no matter what's going on.*

Paul wrote in Phil. 2:19, "But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state." Paul was in a cold, damp prison cell when he penned these words and his foremost thought was the well-being of the brethren in the Philippian church.

When you become your brothers' keeper you need to show interest in others no matter what's going on in your own life. Too many people talk about their problems all the time. Everybody has problems! Love is not selfish and love does not talk about problems. Love asks people how they're doing without telling them what's wrong in your life.

In Phil. 2:3,4 we read, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for

his own interests but also for the interests of others.” This is the highest form of love there is and this is what it means to be your brother’s keeper.

The Message[®] Bible says, “Don’t push your way to the front; don’t sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside and help others get ahead. Don’t be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.”

Paul encouraged the church at Rome to “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another” ^{Rom. 12:10}. The NIV[®] Bible states, “Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.” Love will esteem others better than yourself and will show preference to their wants, needs, and desires.

This doesn’t mean other people are better than you, but you act like they are. If you esteem them you will give them preference. You will serve them and give of yourselves to them. This is the heart of the Master. This is Christianity! Jesus said, “**For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom to many**” ^{Mark 10:45}. 2 Cor. 5:15 tells us, “and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” Jesus also said in Matt. 10:38, “**And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.**”

ELIMINATE SELFISHNESS

Those who become their brothers’ keeper will lay down their lives for other people and do this on a daily basis. You must make a sacrifice so others can benefit. This is the key to fullness of joy. You satisfying yourself all the time will not

satisfy your soul. Selfish people are the most unhappy people in the world. Billionaires are miserable and often commit suicide. You simply cannot satisfy a selfish person.

To be a Christian means to be like Christ, for He is our example. Love serves and is glad to do it even when it’s not convenient. You must be flexible in order to be your brothers’ keeper, for you may be needed in the middle of the night or be asked for money you needed for something else. People need you when they need you, so you must be willing to rearrange your priorities so that you’ll be available during their time of need.

Examine your life and get rid of worthless things that take away your time from serving God and others. Things you do that God doesn’t tell you to do will drain you and wear you out. The grace isn’t there and this is why people are so tired all the time. They’re doing things

People need you when they need you.

they shouldn’t be doing and wasting time on things God didn’t tell them to do. Learn to say “no” to things

that would preoccupy you. Don’t go shopping or fishing when you’re supposed to stay home and pray and be still before the Lord. God speaks in a still, small voice and it’s during these quiet times when divine direction will come.

The covenant bonding of a God-centered friendship involves a willingness to conform and become what the other person in the relationship needs. Love is not selfish and sooner or later it will become necessary for you to put the needs of your friend above your own.

Prov. 17:17 says “a friend loves at all times” and true friendships bring with it endurance and stability. You can always depend upon your friend and your friend can always depend on you. The best friends are the ones who stick by your side no matter what happens and is a

person you can talk to about anything. A true friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out.

Prov. 27:9 says, “Ointment and perfume delight the heart, and the sweetness of a man’s friend does so by hearty counsel.” One of the many reasons a person should daily study the Bible is so he will be able to give Godly advice to a friend in need. “The heart of the righteous studies how to answer” ^{Prov. 15:28} and Prov. 15:13 says, “And a word spoken in due season, how sweet it is.” Words of advice and counsel from a true friend are pleasant because they are used to lift up and not tear down. A friend should always strive to promote and advance the life of the person he is in fellowship with.

LOVE IS HONEST

At the same time, love is also honest. When a friend sees something that needs to be corrected, he will reach out in love and give Godly counsel to his friend and encourage him as the correction is made. The Bible says, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful” ^{Prov. 27:6}.

The Word also says in Prov. 28:23, “He who rebukes a man will find more favor afterward than he who flatters with the tongue.” Words spoken in love will never be mistaken for criticism.

A friend who speaks words of wisdom should also strive to perfect the art of listening. God created us with one mouth and two ears and oftentimes all a person needs is a friend who will listen to them express the needs and concerns of their heart. Psychiatrists earn hundreds of dollars an hour, because years of college has taught them that more can be accomplished by listening than through talking. How

better off we’d be if each of us had a Godly friend who would be there for us during our time of need. It would be a lot cheaper, too.

THE POWER OF ACCEPTANCE

We are commanded by God to love, because people everywhere have a need to be loved and accepted. No amount of achievement can fulfill the need for acceptance. It is a void that only love can fill. Insecurity comes from a lack of one-on-one relationships and can cause people to do great accomplishments for the sole purpose of getting accepted by others.

As Christians we are “rooted and grounded in love” ^{Eph. 3:17} and because we have been “accepted in the Beloved” ^{Eph. 1:6} it has become our responsibility to share with others that God has accepted them as well. This will cause hearts to be filled with joy and it is only joyful believers who are able to reach out and lead others to Christ.

We cannot demonstrate to the world the love of God without a loving relationship with one another. The best friends are the ones who love Jesus together and a church is only as strong as the relationships among its’ members.

Covenant relationships are continuous and should last a lifetime. Many people give roses when they want to make a friend, but give thorns and briars afterward. They then wonder why the friendship failed. You get out of a friendship what you put into it and we must continue to treat people the way we treated them when we were first trying to gain their trust and confidence.

True friend-ships are very rare indeed. Some people will go an entire life and never find a true friend. But don’t give up. A true friend is worth a lifetime of work. Friendships have to be

Friendships require time, effort and a lot of sacrifice.

born and nurtured. They require time, effort, and a lot of sacrifice. And it all begins with you.

Become a friend to somebody in need and watch what happens. It has been said that there are two types of people in the world: those who make deposits into your life and those who make withdrawals. What type of person do you want in your life?

What type are you?

About the author:

Randall J. Brewer has been conveying the mind of God for more than thirty years, and we believe he's just getting started.

Raised in an abusive home, Randall has overcome numerous obstacles throughout his life by his trust in the One True God of the Bible. Writing for the Lord, Randall will put pen to paper anywhere the Lord finds him. From the comfort of his home to sitting in his car in a frozen Illinois parking lot, Randall can tell you that when the Spirit of the Lord is upon you to move... you move wherever you are.

Gifted with the Holy Spirit's willingness to express God's attitude and clarification of the Word, Randall has distributed a myriad of his publications worldwide over the years. Thousands of requests pour in each month needing the ministry teachings of Randall and the Holy Spirit's revelation of the character of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the King.

Countless ministers throughout the world are using Randall's teaching as a basis for their sermons and study guides.

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