

The Great Commandment

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Introduction

The Great Commandment is based on the Christian theme of our Love for God, ourselves and others.

Most people believe that there is something greater than ourselves.

Summary

The Bible is about our relationships with God, ourselves and each other.

The Great Commandment has two parts:

- 1) **Love for God,**
- 2) **Love others as thyself.**

Our Love for God is reflected in our Love for ourselves and each other, AND, our Love for ourselves and each other is reflected in our Love for God.

Two types of Love:

1) Worldly, Self-Focused, Conditional,

- Philautia:** Love for Self, Healthy, Respectful
- Eros:** Love for Sex, Healthy, Respectful
- Ludus:** Love for Joy, Happiness, Playful Love
- Storge:** Love for Family, Forgiveness, Acceptance and Sacrifice
- Philia:** Love for Each other, Brotherly Love
- Agape:** Love for Humanity, Universal Love, God's Love

2) Spiritual, God Focused, Unconditional.

- Patient:** Not jumping to conclusions or making rash decisions,
- Kindness:** Gentleness, compassion, giving, not envious,
- Humble:** Modest, not proud or rude or arrogant,
- Accepting:** None judging, Non demanding, accepting ourselves and others for who they are,
- Forgiving:** Not irritable, not holding past transgressions against ourselves and others,
- Truthfulness:** Maintains justice, honest to ourselves and others,
- Enduring:** Lasting, persistent, bears all things.

To have a Spiritual Love for others is very hard. Most of the time we operate in the Worldly Love. We put conditions on our Love. None of us are perfect, we all sin. We get tired and grumpy, and lose the plot. We all learn about Love from significant others in our childhood.

Anything that is done to others out of our own Spirit does not come from God. To operate in the Spirit we need to have that Spiritual Love for ourselves and others. We need to be in that special place where our own feelings, prejudices and preconceptions are removed.

If we cannot be **Patient** with ourselves how can we be Patient with others?

If we cannot be **Kind** to ourselves how can we be Kind to others?

If we cannot be **Humble** with ourselves how can we be Humble with others?

If we cannot be **Accepting** with ourselves how can we be Accepting with others?

If we cannot be **Forgiving** with ourselves how can we Forgive others?

If we cannot be **Honest** with ourselves how can we be Honest with others?

If we cannot be **Enduring** with ourselves how can we be Enduring with others?

The Great Commandment

“Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt Love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Matthew 22 36-40 KJV).

We all sin, none of us are perfect. Its in our nature to put ourselves first to survive. We are drawn into this world with all of it's promises and expectations. We loose sight of the more important things in Life in our pursuit for happiness.

Jesus Christ shows us another way that is not of this world, but of the Holy Spirit, and eternal.

Jesus Christ (the Son) is our Lord and Saviour. He works with the Farther and the Holy Spirit together as one body, just as the Church is one body with many parts. Our Lord Jesus Christ came to Earth to show us another way to live. Doesn't Jesus want us to share his message of Love and Peace to all the World? Of course he does. The gifts we have been given are to show the power of God's Love, but the fruit of the Spirit is Love... (Galatians 5:22-26).

The Great Commandment has two parts:

- 1) Love for God,
- 2) Love others as thyself

Jesus made a point of separating the great commandment into 2 parts for good reason.

A lot of people think that to **Love others as thyself** naturally flows from a **Love for God**. This is definitely not the case. Most of the Bible is about our relationships with each other. If Loving God led to Loving each other Jesus would not have made the distinction.

The Great Commandment summarises the 10 Commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai, and the Lords Prayer given by Jesus. The first part of the 10 Commandments and the Lords Prayer are about our relationship with God, and the second part is about our relationships with each other.

The New Commandment Jesus gave his disciples at the Last Supper summarises or joins both parts of the Great Commandment into one, *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”* (John 13:34-35). In this commandment the emphasis is on our relationships with each other rather than on our relationship with God, because Love comes from God.

The Old Testament is full of examples where God is unhappy with his people because of their wickedness. The story of Noah is probably the greatest example of God's grief. The Book of Isiah shows us of the Jewish disobedience to God.

The New Testament is full of instruction of how we should Love each other. The Sermon on the Mount and the Lords Prayer are probably the best examples of how we should Love each other.

Jesus uses the story of The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) to show the Jews how they should Love their Neighbour.

“Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.” (Luke 10:36-37).

It is important to understand that the Samaritans were despised because they did not have the same belief in God as the Jews, but they had Love for others. The Jews had Faith in God, but no Love for others. Unfortunately, the Jews were also divided amongst themselves in their Faith in God.

The parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) shows us that we have a choice to follow and be with our Father, or, go our own way. Our Father always Loves us regardless of what we do, however, we are always at the mercy of our carnal nature (Satan). Neither son asked for Grace or Forgiveness. The youngest son felt that he didn't deserve it because of his sin, and the oldest son felt that he didn't need it because of his righteousness. The youngest son's sin, and the eldest son's pride and arrogance kept them both away from their fathers Love. While our Father can not do anything for us when we leave him, his heart cries out for us and hopes for our return.

But what is Love

Worldly, Self-Focused, Conditional...

The Greeks described different types of Love for different situations.

- Philautia:** Love for Self, Healthy, Respectful
- Eros:** Love for Sex, Healthy, Respectful
- Ludus:** Love for Joy, Happiness, Playful Love
- Storge:** Love for Family, Forgiveness, Acceptance and Sacrifice
- Philia:** Love for Each other, Brotherly Love
- Agape:** Love for Humanity, Universal Love, God's Love

There is nothing wrong with the above, they are all important parts of our lives. Of course we put more value in people we know over people we don't know, this is normal. We put conditions on how we Love others for good reason. We need to be very careful who we trust. Satan is out there waiting to deceive us.

When we are feeling dejected and miserable and not understood or Loved, Satan gets into our spirit and we feel rejected by the very people we trusted. We can lose faith in ourselves and others. We can crawl into a hole and withdraw from the world. We can look for Love in other places to fill that void. Loneliness (feeling of being unloved) is one of the greatest causes of emotional and physical problems.

Satan can also deceive us in other ways. Our age, Genes and Hormones have a huge impact in our lives. When we are young our bodies are changing. We may test our boundaries and explore the world around us. We take for granted what we have been given. We may experience a midlife crisis or menopause and everything runs amuck. When we get older we may learn from our experiences and see everything from a different perspective. Our values may change as we move from childhood to adult to old age.

We all see the world from our own perspective. Our culture and way of living when we grow up have a huge unconscious impact in our lives. When we are young we may get hurt by others and lose Faith, trust or confidence in everyone else because of those experiences. We may think we are doing

the right thing, but are we? For some, to Love others is to treat others as they have been treated, that they deserve justice and not Love. We should be able to learn from our own misfortunes and from the troubles of others rather than judging them.

We may see something we don't like or goes against our own feelings, beliefs or how we do things and automatically judge that behaviour or action according to those feelings or beliefs. I know I sometimes have a Stubborn Spirit inside of me. When someone disagrees with me and accuses me of something I didn't say, I take the offensive and accuse them likewise. I'm still learning how to manage this.

“Blessed is the one who always trembles before God, but whoever hardens their heart falls into trouble.” (Proverbs 28:14)

Spiritual, God Focused, Unconditional...

According to the Bible there is only one type of Love.

The Greeks liked to pull everything apart and put everything into it's own compartment. However, Jesus has shown us that Love is not separate pieces, but the sum of it's parts. Love is one, not many.

“22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”
(Galatians 5:22-26)

As far as I know there is only one definition of Love in the bible.

“4 Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud 5 or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. 6 It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. 7 Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.” (1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NLT).

Love is a joyful heart that looks for the beauty around it. Love is a thankful heart that makes the most of what it has. Love is kind to others. Love doesn't look for what it doesn't have but freely shares what it has. Love builds up and doesn't destroy. Love is a childlike innocence that is beyond human understanding. Love grieves when it has been hurt.

Love has 7 parts

Patient: Not jumping to conclusions or making rash decisions,

Kindness: Gentleness, compassion, giving, not envious,

Humble: Modest, not proud or rude or arrogant,

Accepting: None judging, Non demanding, accepting ourselves and others for who they are,

Forgiving: Not irritable, not holding past transgressions against ourselves and others,

Truthfulness: Maintains justice, honest to ourselves and others,

Enduring: Lasting, persistent, believes all things, bears all things.

Dosen't the Apostle John say that if we have a Spirit of Love for another we have the Spirit of God in us (1 John 4:7-9).

Our Love for others is often self centered. We put our own conditions on our Love for others. To Love others means that we give others the benefit of the doubt. We have a duty to correct others

when they act out of self-righteousness, but, this should not come from our own self-righteousness. To Love others is to try to understand their own point of view without judgment, and put across our own point of view in a non-demanding way where there is peace and good will.

To Love others is to treat them as we would like to be treated, with respect and kindness. We become a role model for the world to see. We are judged by our own actions and words to each other, regardless of who they are. This does not mean we have to keep company with others that are loud, aggressive and self-seeking. We need to avoid these people as much as possible. They are vexations to the Spirit. And when we do meet difficult people we need to show them Love (2 Timothy 3:1-9, 1 Peter 3:9). We need to keep company with others that are supportive, reassuring, compassionate and forgiving.

Unfortunately, there are times when we have no choice in who we are in the company of. When we are at work or any social activity there are going to be people who do not share our beliefs. This can be very difficult. We can only do so much according our maturity (Faith) in Christ. Fortunately, God knows this and we will be forgiven when we confess our sin.

To Love God

There is a awareness and belief that life is something greater than ourselves. We have an internal drive to cling on to life here as we know it. A major part of that drive is to Love and be Loved.

We have desires, emotions and dreams that are greater than our biological functions that give meaning to our lives. We need to be a part of something bigger than ourselves. We need fellowship with others. We need to feel valued. Without Love our lives are are purposeless and unfulfilled.

God is that reason for living. God is Love and that Love comes from God who is in us, and we are in him (1 John 4:16).

The word "Love" is used about 310 times in the KJV. Yes Love is used in different situations and contexts in the Bible, but the underlying principle is the same, that we should Love God, ourselves and each other unconditionally regardless of who we/they are.

To have an unconditional Faith in God is to have an unconditional Faith in others. Love is the ability to recognise our own feelings in a situation and to have the tools to be able to overcome those feelings and learn how to deal with them properly.

This takes time and patience. We are not faultless, we all learn as we go along our journey and make mistakes, but if we are forgiving to ourselves and others, we will be forgiven (Matthew 6: 14-15).

Our Lord Jesus came to bring God's Love to the whole World. Jesus came to establish a New Covenant and to bring forgiveness to those who recognise their sin and prey for forgiveness in their heart. They will be forgiven, and, to those others they will not be forgiven. If we Love God and others as we Love ourselves we will fulfill God's promise and will be blessed.

It seems to me that a lot of Christians see this World as a bad evil place. Is this correct? Didn't Jesus refer to our worldly flesh and the evil intent in our heart? Isn't the sin in our heart and not in the world? Whatever we see around us we have the choice to look for good or evil in this world, for there is both good and evil in this World. We can see God's blessings around us only if we stop to have a look, or we can look for Satan around every corner. We can do his work on Earth only if we stop and Listen to him in Prayer and meditation, in our heart, soul and mind. Or we can do Satan's work.

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To Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind is to Love life itself, because we are of God. To Love God is to Love what he has given us with a thankful heart. To have a joy in life is to appreciate what we have been given. God gave us the heavens and the stars to be amazed by his glory. His signs and wonders are everywhere to be seen, if we stop to have a look. Have you never looked up into the sky on a clear night? Do you see the darkness? Of course you don't, you see his magnificence.

There is a beauty and majesty about his creation that we could never hope to come close to. How often do we take for granted what God has already given us? How often do things for our own glory instead of God's glory?

God is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God made the forests and trees perfect in his own image for us to cherish and look after. However, we may see a tree and think to our self that a branch is in the wrong place or some leaves need to be removed. The more we make the tree perfect in our own image the less perfect it becomes in God's image. Are we not the same? The more we make ourselves perfect in our own image the less perfect we become in God's image.

A lot of people look for signs, wonders and miracles as God's love for us. I am not saying that there is anything wrong in this. They are wonderful expressions of his presence. However there is a danger of becoming preoccupied with these manifestations. A person may become disappointed when they do not happen, or, not recognise or understand where they come from. We loose sight of God's Authority and Grace.

I think there is a moral in this that when we start taking God's love for granted or put conditions on his love we may become disillusioned and blame our Father, or Satan, for our own or others troubles. We don't take authority for our own actions.

“17 pray continually, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1

Thessalonians 5:17-18 NIV).

Always reflect in prayer and meditation the beauty of God's creation and what he has already done for you, and others, with a thankful heart. It is only then, you will see the Love and Peace inside, that comes from God, in yourself and others.

Have you ever thought about all the pain and suffering, and Love, it took to write the Bible. That's how much God Loves us. I like to think of the Bible as a chocolate cheesecake (my favorite). We look at each verse in the Bible in it's own right and feel the power of the words. But when we put the verses together we begin to understand a greater purpose that has a beauty and perfection of its own. Just as we have all the ingredients of a cake on the table. Each ingredient is special in it's own right, but when they are put together with time, effort and Love the whole becomes greater than it's parts.

Isn't God like that, with us.

Hasn't all the major medical and scientific achievements come from someone that has a deep faith in God and a genuine desire to bless others?

To Love others as ourselves

Jesus clearly states that we must Love our neighbour as our self. But what does this mean? To Love our neighbour as our self doesn't come naturally. God has given us all the choice to follow him or our own

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worldly desires. It's up to us. We literally have to die to ourselves and put our carnal nature behind us. The bible is full of instruction in how we should Love ourselves and each other.

God made us all in his own image. God is Love and the Holy Spirit lives in us all. Our Love for God is reflected in our Love for ourselves and each other, AND, our Love for ourselves and each other is reflected in our Love for God.

There are principles and rules we need to understand and follow or we will not make it. When we first learn about our father through Jesus we need help and support. All the knowledge is just theory until we get into the big bad world. Of course we are going to be disappointed. Of course there will be times when we fall and our carnal nature kicks in. We need others around us to encourage and inspire us in our time of need. We need to feel Loved.

Our Love languages to ourselves and each other, both conscious and unconscious, determines how we Love each other. How others treat us affects how we feel about ourselves. How we are feeling about ourselves is reflected in how we treat others. We need to be able to release any negative emotions in a healthy and positive way so they don't consume us.

When we feel violated we have unforgiveness in our heart. Satan has come in and taken our peace and our Love. We need to seek justice. How could that person or people do that to me? It consumes us. I remember when my Uncle died I was expecting some money from the estate that was promised to me. The executor of his Will refused to give me what I was entitled to and tried to blackmail me with threats that I could only get the money on a set of conditions. All I could see was justice /revenge that the Lawyer had no right to do what he did. I certainly did not Love that Lawyer.

When we are consumed by unforgiveness our mind and body can not function properly.
We may find that...

- We can't sleep properly.
- We can't remember things properly.
- We can't make rational decisions.
- We are emotionally and mentally worn out.
- Our immune system doesn't work properly.
- We are physically worn out.
- Have feelings of being unloved.
- Have impatience with others.

When a person feels that he/she is not Loved, it can be a warning sign that that they don't Love themselves. A lack of self Love can be caused by a major trauma or a series of small compounding incidents in a person's life that lead to a loss of self-worth and rejection. When we were younger we may have been told we weren't wanted, are useless, or regularly beaten up or locked away from the world like an animal. This can lead to a circular pattern of thinking (a Self Fulfilling Prophecy) where a person expects to be rejected and then behaves in such a way that they are rejected.

Does the person..

- Withdraw from friends and social activities.
- Become jealous of what others have?
- Persecute/crucify themselves or others?
- Live in denial, it's someone else's fault?
- Become self centered, the whole world revolves around them?
- Feel unsettled and insecure, and is always looking for a place to rest?
- Live in the past/future because he/she can't face the present?

Feel overwhelmed by their circumstances, depressed?
Feel they can not manage the simplest of tasks with out help?
Have feelings of paranoia, that the whole world is against them?
Rationalise everything around their own point of view?
Look for the worst in every situation?
Have ongoing health issues?
Feel suicidal?

Because of these feelings a person can...

- 1) Become shy, fearful, introverted or withdraw from social contact altogether, or
- 2) Over compensate for these feelings and try to make friends by overreaching the friendships...
 - Over stepping others boundaries in the hope of being Loved,
 - Give money or personal things to others when it is not needed, or
 - Over confident, attention seeking,
 - Over emphasising, bragging or lying about their own importance or achievements,
 - Crying to others about their own situation,
 - Demanding, or
- 3) Find that they attach themselves to the same relationships that they had in the past because that is all they know. They are used/abused/manipulated by others, or
- 4) Develop antisocial behaviour...
 - Hoarding,
 - Abnormal attachment to animals,
 - Bullying/manipulating others, putting others down,
 - Drugs and alcohol,
 - Sex and prostitution,
 - Stalking others,
 - Self abuse.

Aren't these people the ones that need to feel Loved the most.

If we look for Love in ourselves and others, no matter how small, we will find him.

If we look for hate in ourselves and others, no matter how small, we will find him.

Better to bring Love, no matter how small, out of ourselves and others rather than hate.

We may be surprised at what we find, and, if we attend to Love properly it will grow as a mustard seed.

We feel Loved because we know we are Loved, AND, we know we are Loved because we feel Loved.
To Love our neighbour as our self is to Love, honour and respect each other as we Love, honour and respect ourselves. To do unto others as we would have them do unto us. This is not vanity or pride, but a Love and peace in our heart and a good will to ourselves and others.

If we cannot be **Patient** with ourselves how can we be Patient with others?

If we cannot be **Kind** to ourselves how can we be Kind to others?

If we cannot be **Humble** with ourselves how can we be Humble with others?

If we cannot be **Accepting** with ourselves how can we be Accepting with others?

If we cannot be **Forgiving** with ourselves how can we Forgive others?

If we cannot be **Honest** with ourselves how can we be Honest with others?

If we cannot be **Enduring** with ourselves how can we be Enduring with others?

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How can we Love our partner if we don't Love our self? How can we Love our children or parents if we don't Love our self? How can we Love others if we don't Love our self? Mostly was we just make enemies out of the people we should Love.

Sometimes we are our own worst enemy when things don't go the way we want. We don't take responsibility for our own actions. When the world crashes around us we can become angry and bitter and look for Love in all the wrong places.

Some people look for Love in controlling others or in abusive relationships.

Some people look for Love in violence; they Love to hate.

Some people look for Love in drugs.

Some people look for Love in sex and prostitution.

Some people look for Love in money and power.

Some people look for Love in their work.

Some people look for Love in their pets.

Some people look for Love in idols or other objects that have a special significance.

Some people look for Love in a club or social group.

Some people look for Love in a cult or religion.

We all have buttons that when they are pushed can lead to unexpected consequences. Sometimes others unconsciously push a button that leads to sadness, anger or resentment. This is a normal human reaction based on our past experiences and we lose control of our emotions. We are no longer at peace with ourselves, or others. A word or experience may be enough to push a button that leads to an emotional response in one person and yet has no effect on another person. Father's day, Mother's day, Valentine's Day, a birthday, a death or even Christmas can also be a button or trigger that can set of an emotional response.

We can take things out of context and build mountains out of mole hills. This is our human nature and God knows this. He can move that mountain if we let him. How often do we say to each other "I hate that person" when we really hate ourselves because we really know that what that person is saying is true? How often do we hate someone because we don't get what we want even when we know it's bad or unhealthy for us? How often have we felt violated because what someone has said or done to us? How often have we wished in our heart some misfortune on ourselves because of what we have done? How often have we wished in our heart some misfortune on someone else because of what they have done to us? We seek justice according to our own righteousness with revenge in our heart. We only end up destroying ourselves and the others we should Love in the process.

Don't worry, you are not alone, I'm just as guilty as any one else. I'm not trying to say that I am perfect, I'm not. I have my problems and troubles just the same as anyone else. But I know that I am Loved for who I am and I don't try to be anything else. And frankly, I don't care if others don't like me, it's there problem and not mine, but sometimes I am hurt.

"1 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing." (1 Corinthians

13:1-3 NIV).

Our Love for others

“Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care.” (Teddy Roosevelt)

“18Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth. 19This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: 20If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. 21Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God 22and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. 23And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. 24The one who keeps God’s commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.” (1 John 3:18-24 NIV)

There are four types of relationships that we can have with others...

Independent: No reliance on others. There is no support between others.

Dependent: One person is totally dependent on others for their needs.

Codependent: Mutually dependent on each other. Nobody can do anything without the other/others.

Interdependent: Supports each other in the relationship. Each person brings something of value into the relationship.

We all go through all these types of relationships in our day to day lives. When we are on our own we need to be independent and be able to manage without any support. When we are young, old, sick, or disabled we need the support of others in the relationship. During a crisis we need to work together as a team and rely on others to do their fair share. The ideal situation is to have an Interdependent relationship where everyone can support each other, but that rarely happens. It is only by Loving others with a genuine unconditional Love that comes from our Father that we can live fulfilled lives. Patience, kindness, humility and forgiveness allow us to better understand others needs.

Love does not come from outside, but from inside. It is this Love for others that comes from God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit that makes us whole. God accepts us for who we are. God first Loved us, so shouldn't we Love ourselves and each other.

After all didn't Jesus remind us that while it is OK to Love our brothers we are no better than anyone else? It is only when we have a Love for our enemies that we really know our Father's Love. Doesn't God Love and bless the wicked and the unjust the same as the righteous? Didn't Jesus ask us to pray for and bless our enemies? Didn't Jesus die on the cross to redeem us of our Sins. Shouldn't we do the same to others.

Does a husband Love his wife? Does a wife Love her husband? Does a Father/mother Love his/her children? Does a child Love his/her parents? Do we Love our neighbour as ourself? Where does our Love for each other come from? How do we show that Love to others? Selfish Love comes from ourselves. Selfless Love comes from God.

Unfortunately there are a lot of people who have not experienced this genuine Love that comes from our Father. We all learn about Love from significant others in our formative years. As children we may grow up in a place without Love. Love to some is being abused physically, emotionally or mentally. Love to others is being locked away or abandoned, or a complete lack of empathy, respect or interest. What we give to our children can easily become a generational curse, or a blessing.

When we are not Loved, all sorts of other stuff comes in to fill that void such as self-abuse, greed, controlling others, dependency on others, drugs, violence, sexual immorality etc..

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I have met some people in the Church that are so wounded by what has happened to them they use religion to escape the reality of their lives. Jesus came to release us from our past, not to bind us into our past by living in our denial or trying to run away from it. We can pray for them and cast out demons. We can bring them into Gos's presence and any number of other things, but, if we haven't given them Love, we have given them nothing (Matthew 12:43-45 NIV).

A lot of people think that speaking the truth in Love is the same as Tough Love. According to Jesus ***"speaking the truth in Love"*** (Ephesians 4:15) is kindness, patience, forgiving someone 70 times⁷, loving your enemies, giving to others, going the extra mile, encouraging, building up others so that they are valued and looking for the good in others, no matter how small. If you find a problem with another, first find the log in your own eye.

And for God's sake, tell them how much you Love them and how important they are to you. Isn't this how God first Loved us? Be like Christ and Love others as you are Loved.

This can sometimes be very tough to do.

Shouldn't we greet others with a smile.

Shouldn't we support and encourage each other in their endeavours.

Shouldn't we share in their achievements and disappointments.

Shouldn't we share with others without groaning or complaining.

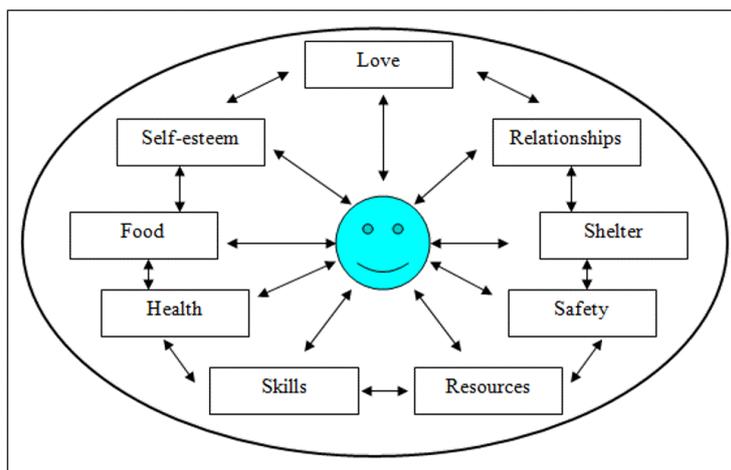
Shouldn't we give others the benefit of the doubt and forgive them for what they have done to us.

Shouldn't we apologise with a sincere heart when we have disappointed them.

Shouldn't we Love them?

Our Father already knows when we have forgiveness our own heart, and can forgive us of our own sin (Luke 6:37, Matthew 6:14).

We can also give to another any amount of physical bits and pieces, but if we have not given them Love we have given them nothing (1 Corinthians 13:3).



Love is the bond that holds everything else together

Aren't we like a tree in a forrest. Most of the time we can only see the other trees around us and base our decisions on our past experiences and what we see around us. We can never see the forrest for what is is. But God can. God knows the intimate detail of every twig and leaf in the forrest. How can we presume to demand our own way with others, or even with God (Book of Job).

Love is greater than any other human desire. Love is the embodiment of life itself. We all have trials and tribulations in life. We are not perfect, we all Sin. Regardless of who we are we all have our faults and some more than others, but our Love is made perfect in us through our Love for God, ourselves and each other. That's God's promise to us.

Judging others

“I Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” (Matthew 7: 1-2 NIV)

When we don't feel comfortable about a situation or see others doing something we don't like we gossip and criticise.

We may treat others according our own beliefs and feelings and unconsciously judge others without realising it. We might make assumptions about another person or people because we don't understand, or like, what they are saying or doing. We often say things to each other that are better off left unsaid.

When we are stressed we may take everything personally. Don't we get disappointed or upset with others when they hurt us. Most of the time others are innocent of any wrong doing. I may do something or make a comment about something and the other person is offended by the action or comment. I may be totally unaware that I offended that person and may get accused of any number of things. I would probably react to defend myself. This can set of a chain of events that will only end up in more grief and heartache for everyone involved. Do we ever think about the consequences of our actions and what could happen? What happens when your next door neighbour fills up your rubbish bin?

I remember saying to someone that “I have met a few Christians that have been hurt by the Church and they want nothing to do with it.” I got a tirade of condemnation and was challenged why I said that. I certainly did not expect the reaction and tried to explain. I was shot down at all attempts to clarify. I felt trapped and reacted by attacking the person.

Sometimes it's not what is said or done, it's our own Spirit that puts the meaning into those words or actions. For example, if I ask you come into my office to talk about something. This is an open request. But, if you have been physically abused or taken advantage of previously your mind relives all those experiences that happened before. If you have been reprimanded or verbally chastised before you may prepare yourself for battle.

When we have a Spirit of Love and Peace in our heart, we have God's amour on. We can confidently walk into any situation knowing that anything that is thrown at us can be used by God to his advantage. When we make peace with others they may see it in our Spirit and things can work to our, God's, advantage. Unfortunately this does not work all the time and we can only ask our Father to Forgive them and Bless them. If we Bless them we are not cursing them.

New Christians are coming to terms with their new identity. Maybe they need 'L' plates. They get things wrong and don't always understand what they are doing wrong. They need Discipleship. They need someone to walk alongside them to help them when they stumble. They are babies and can only take baby food. I have seen new Christians get all fired up about Jesus, which is good, and get into a heated debate, which is not good, with other Christians, nonChristians or atheists who do not have the same opinions. Jesus asks us to shake their dust off our feet and move on. Its even happened to me where Ive been caught up in some passionate discussions.

“1 Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. 2 I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. 3 You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?” (1 Corinthians 3:1-3 NIV).

Just as a person learning how to drive a car needs supervision. He/she may have studied the road laws, read the books and learned all the techniques, but getting into the driving seat is a whole different story altogether. Putting theory into practice is a real challenge for some.

The new Christian also needs guidance and correction. They need to know what they are doing right and wrong. The last thing they need is condemnation. They need to feel Loved. God gives us what we need. He will never condemn us or let us down.

I have seen some new Christians that desperately need our help, their own problems are so overwhelming they can't see anything else. They are hurting inside, they are their own worst enemy.

I remember an incident where a person went from one person to another in a church looking for help. He could not get into a quiet place to rest. He needed to unload his troubles. He was very stressed. This person successfully destroyed all attempts to help him. Unfortunately anybody that tried to help was soon cut down. He demanded this and that. Nobody could help him. Word got around the church to avoid that person. And sure enough, word got out and things got worse for him. He felt rejected and unloved. He was like a lion in a cage trying to get out, and the more he tried, the worse things got. We can pray for him, but don't you believe that our Lord Jesus Christ wants us to accept and Love him?

I grew up in a Christian family. I remember when I was a child I used to make fun of my youngest brother. When I hurt him my mother used to scold me and to apologise to him. I would say to him “I'm sorry”, but in my heart I never meant it and my brother knew it. I remember saying in my heart “I'm sorry I didn't hurt you more.” But after saying “I'm sorry” more than a few times to my brother and others, I began to understand what it actually meant. I really started to feel sorry in my heart for what I had done.

It is true. We begin to believe in our heart what we say to ourselves and others when we say it often enough. That's the power of the Love of God. It's how we detox our Spirit, our Mind and our Body.

Years later when I felt regret for the way I had treated him I said to him “I'm sorry for the way I had treated you.” And he knew in his heart that this was true, and I felt a bond between us I never felt before. This is what Love is.

There are a lot of people that have been hurt or disillusioned by the Church. When a person says that he doesn't know God, it doesn't mean that God doesn't know that person.

We all have different needs. Some issues that people may have are, 1) been abused by someone in the church, 2) a lack of understanding in the role of the church, 3) that the church is perceived as a threat to their way of life. Some people want to learn what it means to be a Christian. Some people are looking for fellowship with others and want to serve. Others look for Prayer, Healing or a Prophetic word.

Please don't misunderstand what I am saying. Prayer and meditation are important. We need to leave this world and get into that Special place with our Father. We need to feel that Peace and Love that can only come from our Father. Only then can we Love others without judgement, as we are Loved. When we feel distressed or overwhelmed about life it can be difficult to get into a quiet place. For new Christians who have had a challenging life this can be difficult.

The Great Commandment

When we are not Loved we compare ourselves to others and try to be someone we are not in the hope of being Loved. We try to conform to the culture of the church, or a clique within the church, to gain respect in the hope of being Loved. Instead, we get caught up in the hysteria.

Peer pressure makes us conform to unrealistic expectations of how we should act and treat others that are not on our side or may have a different opinion to ours. We become sheep in a paddock being led around by someone else and lose our identity in Christ.

Some Christians may take Bible verses out of the context that they were written in, to justify or support a particular way of thinking (and I'm probably just as guilty in this as anybody else).

Sometimes a person is taught something that feels right from a worldly point of view and seems to make sense, but is not correct when applied in the setting that was originally intended.

Some Christians may tell us that we need to please God by Speaking in Tongues, Healing or Prophesying to each other, or that we need to go to Bible study, or go to this seminar or that conference, or any number of other things to be happy. Why is this? Some new Christians just get a headache from all the information out there. Can we ever please God on our own doing? Sometimes, the more we try in our own understanding, the less likely it will happen. We end up just running around in circles going nowhere. ***“8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God”*** (Ephesians 2:8).

We may think that God will give us whatever we want. We may say to ourselves “I pray and read the bible and give money to the church. Why aren't I getting what I deserve?” So we pray more, read more, study more and give more money to the church to be blessed. Nothing could be further from the truth. God wants us to give from a cheerful and thankful heart for the blessings we have already received. We give so that we can bless others, not that we deserve to be blessed (2 Corinthians 9).

We may see the success of others, but have no idea of the amount of work and heartache that it required to achieve that success. It's a bit like the saying “The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence”. Don't we envy others in what they have. Be carefull in what you desire, for your treasure will also be where your heart desires (Luke 12: 32-34 NIV).

What I do know is that there are some people out there that say they Love God but don't know how to Love themselves, or others. They religiously follow scripture, speak in tongues, chase prophetic words, and other gifts of the Spirit in the pursuit of Love. They just end up crucifying themselves and others around them. They see our life and troubles and walk on by or talk amongst themselves. They think we don't know God and pray for our salvation instead of helping us through our time of need, just as Job was condemned by his friends.

When we know of, or meet, a person that is not a follower of Jesus we may unconsciously treat the person differently. The same may happen if the person is a Muslem, a Roman Catholic, or even a person of a different ethnic background or colour. Don't we judge that person? Our words and actions towards others can be a curse or a blessing.

We were all created in the image of God. When we reject the Holy Spirit inside of us, we reject ourselves (who we are in Christ) and let Satan into our lives. When we have Faith in the righteousness of our Father in our heart, how can we judge others (Job 38 - 42)?

Doesn't our own pride get in the way and we try to do it in our own understanding. There is a battle in our own Spirit (Romans 7). We need to focus on the nature of God, which is Love. All we need to do is stop, look, listen. Let the Holy Spirit lead us. Focus on what is right and good, the beautiful and unsoiled, with a forgiving and thankful heart and our Father will wash you clean.

We may think we have all the answers, but we really don't, and neither do I. We should follow Jesus and not each other.

And remember, We have the authority to speak **Life** (blessings) or **Death** (curses) over ourselves and others through what we say and our actions. We need to ask ourselves what is the intent behind what we say and how we act toward each other. God knows where our heart is and we will be judged accordingly.

“I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward each person according to their conduct, according to what their deeds deserve.” (Jeremiah 17:10 NIV).

We may think to ourselves, or say to others, something like “My life is such a mess”, or, “Im sick of you always doing that.”, or, “You are not behaving your self.”, or, “Don't climb that tree. You will hurt yourself.”, or, “That person is an #*****.”, or, “Stop pestering me”. Have you ever said to someone “Don't look down.”, or “Don't drop that tray of drinks.”? Even refusing to acknowledge a person can send a message of rejection. What are we saying over ourselves and others? Are we a blessing or a curse to ourselves and each other?

Who gave us the authority to be impatient or unkind, to be jealous or boastful or proud or rude, to demand our own way, to be irritable, or keep records of being wronged, or to rejoice about injustice, to give up or lose Faith, or give up hope, or surrender in every circumstance? Certainly not God.

Some Christians just never get it right. They blame everybody else but themselves. They do the same things over and over without learning that our Farther is in control. They don't take responsibility for their own actions.

Jesus said that he had come for the broken, the unwanted and the unloved...

“... be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility for God resisteth the proud and gives grace to the humble.” (1 Peter 5:5).

“Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6:2 KJV)

We should bear each others burdens in Love and prayer, and, support each other in their time of need. It is only when we can sit down and share their pain that we can learn to Love them.

Why do we go through conflict

Everything happens for a reason. Our Father is in control regardless of how or what we think (Ecclesiastes 3). Our Father knows us more than we do.

“I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.” (Isaiah 45:7).

It doesn't matter who we are, we all go through trials. Christianity is not about avoiding conflict, but acknowledging and dealing with conflict in a Christian way.

There are a number of reasons why conflict happens in our lives.

Our Father allows conflict to happen...

To test us in our faithfulness just as Noah, Job, Jesus, Paul and others were (1 Peter 1:7, James 1:12-22). Our father is with us and carries us through unavoidable stuff that is done to us by others. Satan will

come and deceive and rob us of our relationship with our Father as in the garden of Eden and Jesus in the desert. Our own desires give way to Sin. Our selfish pride and ego will consume us.

To strengthen us and allow us to learn from our experiences. The Mind, Body and Soul needs stress to function properly. Our bodies change as we get older, we explore the world around us, we make mistakes and learn that we are not the centre of the universe. It's how we adapt to life that makes the difference.

To have compassion for others and be able to support them in their time of need. We don't care until we have been there. It is only when we have been through the same experiences as others we then have a greater understanding of their needs and are less likely to judge them.

We don't listen to our Father...

Our humanity takes over and we try to do things in our own strength. We may think we are doing our Fathers will, but are we?

Our Father knows what is best for us and gives us what we need and not what we want. We may want a new BMW or Porsche, but do we need it? We may take his Love for granted and expect everything as a privilege or right.

Satan causes trouble in our lives...

There is unhealthy stuff happening in our lives that cause conflict that need to be removed. Where we work, our relationships with others, what we eat or drink all have an impact on our lives.

We may have...

Unforgiveness

A Religious Spirit

An Unhealthy Soul Tie

A Generational Curse

A False Teaching

A False God

Or any number of other things happening in our lives that we are not aware of.

We may think the whole world is against us and use religion as an escape from our troubles.

When we are feeling Unloved

We are all a work in progress, there is nobody who is perfect. Anybody that tells us differently is a liar. Jesus shows us how we should live our lives. The more we try to be perfect in our own strength the less likely it will happen. All that happens is that we judge ourselves and others by our own standards. We become proud, demanding, self righteous and self seeking, as Satan wants us to do. So just relax and let God's will be done in your own life and others. Don't aspire to be something you are not. Accept and Love your self for who you are and others as they are.

We all struggle with our relationship with our Father at one time or another. This is normal. Our day to day living can be very stressful and takes a heavy toll on us. We live in this world and the worldly things can take us away from our Fathers Love. We lose our Peace and Love for others. We need to let go of those unhealthy emotions in a positive way or they will destroy us.

Jesus was no different. He had human emotions and weaknesses. His ministry was very demanding. Jesus needed to spend a lot of time at the Mount of Olives and other places in Prayer with our Father. Jesus' solitude and silence allowed him to recharge his batteries, deal with troubling emotions like grief, anger and frustration and to make important decisions. It's how he taught his disciples, even they had their own struggles. They were not perfect, and they did not pretend to be.

Are we any different? There is a lot of negative energy in the world. The only way to get into that special place is to be away from the world with all of its demands. If you can't find that special place, don't stress. Just relax and think about all the things that you have been blessed with, with a thankful heart.

We all go through times when we feel unloved or rejected. We all have our own hopes and desires, our own misfortunes, our own ways of coping with our day to day lives, and to some extent our own beliefs about God change according to our needs at a particular time.

Unhealthy stress can sneak up on us without us realising it. Like the straw that broke the camels back stress can slowly build up until something happens and totally breaks our Spirit.

Some emotions that we may experience when we have been hurt...

Offense/Anger/Resentment. We may think that it's their fault. Remember, if we can't Love others for who they are, it's our problem not theirs. We need to forgive them and ourselves.

Sadness/Guilt/Depression. We may think that it's our own fault. Remember, if others can't Love us for who you are, it's their problem not ours. We need to forgive them and ourselves.

Overwhelmed. Feelings of being consumed, burdened, unable to find peace.

Denial. We may avoid the issue or problem and hope it just goes away. We may develop a strategy that allows you to live with the issue.

Rebuilding & Renewal. We may find that accepting the situation is spiritually and physically unhealthy and reach out to others we trust and to God in Prayer because we have nowhere else to go.

Acknowledgement, Forgiveness & Confidence. We acknowledge our sin. Father, please forgive me for I have sinned. We begin to have confidence to forgive ourselves of our sin, and the sin of others against us, and reach out in Love. We pray for them and look for the good in others that have hurt us. Sometimes this may take months or even years to forgive them. ***"14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."*** (Matthew 6:14-15 NIV).

Restoration. We may feel that the burden has been removed.

When we are feeling unloved we can talk to our Father...

Feeling his presence...

Above all else, Don't persecute yourself or others, Jesus has already done that for you and them.

And feel relaxed. We all have stress in our lives without noticing it, we can't function properly without stress. It's only when something comes along that is greater than we can bear that trouble happens. We have all been there. Take some deep breaths. Try to focus on something positive.

It's ok. Give yourself permission to be angry and upset just as Jesus did. Jesus felt all the human emotions that we do. Be open and honest and learn to recognise them. Learn to accept them. Learn to understand them. It's only then that God can do anything about them.

God has already given us the tools to endure emotional pain. God gave us a way to let go of our unhealthy feelings, anger, deep sadness etc.. We cry out in tears which releases oxytocin and other hormones. Tears are God's way to detox our Spirit, Mind and Body of stress, sadness, grief, anxiety,

and frustration. We also need to be in the company of people we trust. We need to be able to share with others without judgment. We need to be able laugh and smile. We need fellowship with others.

Prayer and Fasting is also an important way to remove the rubbish from our Spirit, Mind and Body. It allows the Spirit to heal and teaches us self control. This allows us to properly focus on God's word.

We need to be in a quiet place away from the world. We need to be able to reflect on what we have and not what we don't have in prayer and meditation. We need to be able to focus on the good things with a thankful heart.

Listening to him...

Our Father will communicate his Love for you in any number of ways. It takes time to learn and understand his ways. We need to be in a quiet place and remove our spiritual static to tune into him.

Through Scripture. Read the Bible.

You may feel in your heart his Love for you and what he wants you to do.

You may hear his voice that no one else can hear in your mind.

You may have a feeling or a premonition, good or bad, about something that is going to happen.

Take notice of it. Think on it. Where is it coming from?

God will talk to you and encourage you through the world around you. He will talk to you through others, a dream, a Word of Knowledge or a Prophecy, a song on the radio, a book or anything else.

I have also experienced times when God is not happy about what I am doing in my own self-righteousness. He will set up a road block or put obstacles in my way to slow me down and make me think about what I'm doing. Has this ever happened to you?

Talking to him...

Laugh and the world laughs with you. Cry and you cry alone, but our Father is there with you and shares your grief. Know one else knows your pain as you do. God is your Father and Protector. You have a personal relationship with our Father through Jesus Christ. You are nothing without him. He already knows your burdens and wants you to share them with him. He loves you unconditionally and he desires to be a part of your life.

When you are troubled and feel unloved you can tell him your troubles. You can write him a letter releasing your pain. Tell him everything. You can tell him what happened and how you felt, the anger pain and bitterness (Book of Job). You can let it all out because he wants you to give him your burdens, and you can trust him. When you come into that special place you can ask him to forgive you for your sin AND most importantly ask forgiveness for those that have hurt you, ***“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”*** (Luke 23:34).

This opens the door for forgiveness, healing and restoration in your own life and the lives of others. Once you are in that special place and have forgiveness in your heart you can then ask our Father to show you how you can Love others as you are Loved. He will tell you.

Just remember that God is always with you, even when you are not with him. He is always with you. And be carefull in what you feel, hear or do. If it is full of self-righteousness, negativity, criticism, judgement, complaint, pride or ego etc. it is **NOT** of God. Throw it away and don't listen to the feelings or person. You can rebuke that feeling or person in Love as Jesus rebuked Peter (Mark 8:33).

A personal affirmation...

“I am of God and the Holy Spirit lives within me.”

“I am patient and kind. I am not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. I do not demand my own way. I am not irritable, and I keep no record of being wronged. I do not rejoice about injustice but rejoice whenever the truth wins out. I never give up, never lose faith, am always hopeful, and endure through every circumstance.”

“8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. 9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.” (Philippians 4:8-9).

Love your enemy

“You can please some of the people all of the time, you can please all of the people some of the time, but you can't please all of the people all of the time” (Poet John Lydgate as made famous by Abraham Lincoln).

It doesn't matter what we do in life there is always going to be *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*. There will always be others around that are intent on destroying our lives. There are the vain, the bitter, the downright obnoxious and others that just don't Love themselves or others. Jesus never said that he will remove these people from us. But he did say he would protect us from them.

“44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:44-48).

I remember I had a bumper sticker on my car, *“Love your Enemies. It will scare the Hell out of them”*. I wish I still had it, it got lots of reactions.

To Love your enemy is show them grace and forgiveness. To pray for our enemy is to let go of the pain and suffering they have caused us. It gets us into the right state of heart and mind so we don't retaliate and act out of self-righteousness, revenge or retribution (Matthew 5:38-42). How can we curse someone when we pray for them. *“36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”* (Luke 6: 36).

It's easier to pray for people that we don't meet all the time. Its really hard to pray for people that we have to be with on a daily basis. At school, at work, the gym or any social gathering there will be someone you wish would just go away and leave you in peace. It can be difficult to Love them.

“9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” (Galatians 6:9 NIV).

How do we know if God is not testing our faith just as he did with Job (Job 1:6-12). God will give us only what we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13). Let us be a witness of God's Love to them (Matthew 5:16).

“Keep Your Friends Close and Your Enemies Closer” (Machiavelli in 'The Prince').

The Great Commandment

It's only when we get close to our enemies that we have a chance to get to know them. We can find out what makes them tick. It's only then we have an opportunity to learn how to Love them for who they are. They may have stuff in the closet that they can't let go of, maybe we can help them let go.

When you are working with a difficult person...

- Ask God how to Love that person.
- Be positive and don't grumble or complain.
- Be Patient, Kind, Forgiving and don't Judge.
- Find something good about the person and praise him/her about it.
- Do something for that person that they don't expect.

You may be surprised about what happens.

- Try to be their friend without judgment.
- Listen to what they are saying.
- Let them finish and ask questions about what you don't understand.
- Ask them how they are feeling about something they said.
- Show some compassion. You can share some of your own experiences with them.

Sometimes we can't do anything for them.

Sometimes we are our own worst enemy.

- Shouldn't we Love ourselves as we are Loved?
- Is that person there for a reason? Why did God put that person into my life?
- Is there something in myself I need to change so I can Love others?
- Was I offended by what they said or did to me?
- Was I physically abused?
- Does the person know that they have offended/abused me?
- Does anyone else know?

Our Journey in life

Yes life can be a challenge. We are constantly being stressed by events and things around us. Stress is an important part of our life. Without stress we do not grow or learn to cope with new situations. The body needs stress to work properly and efficiently. However, excessive stress can have disastrous effects on the Spirit, Mind and Body. Greed, envy, bitterness, pride and unforgiveness can sneak up upon us like a thief in the night. It will rob us of our joy, happiness and Love for life.

“10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (John 10:10).

I see life as a journey. We are born into this world through the miracle of conception when God breathed his life into us and then after some years we leave our physical bodies behind. We all have our own journey. What happens after is determined by our beliefs and Spirit (Faith) here on earth, and how we treat each other along the way.

For example, this guy (Jesus) says to me...

“My Father has a great place in Heaven where all your desires are fulfilled and you will experience true happiness. But whichever way you go, on your own journey in life, you will not be able to take anything with you where you are going.

All your needs will be provided for along your way. You will see such beautiful things that you never saw before that my Father had already given you.

You will share your experiences with them. My Father has given you a special gift to minister to yourself and others you meet. My Father has also given them their own special gifts to support and minister to you in your own need and to others in their own needs on their journey.

*You will also encounter obstacles. There will be detours, disappointments, and tragedies. Others will cut you off, discourage you and try to redirect you from your own journey in life. You must **Endure** the journey because it will not be easy.*

*But take heart, if you abide in me my Spirit will be with you to keep you safe. You must Love each other as you are Loved. Be **Patient, Kind, Humble, Accepting, Forgiving** and **Honest** to yourself and others or you will not make it. There are the laws that must be observed, but if you keep my commandments you will fulfil those laws.”*

“Be at peace with yourself and do not demand your own way with others, for they have their own journey in Life.”

*“Above all else have **Faith**. At the end of your journey my Father has a place already prepared for you to rest. Where you are going you will not want for anything.”*

“Oh, and along your way, tell as many others as you can about this place and the means to get there. There will be people that know God, but not my father or me. They have their own journey and will be judged accordingly by their actions. There will be others that will not listen to my message. It will fall on barren ground and not bear fruit. To those others, they will have their own reward. Shake their dust of your feet and move on to another person.”

Of course I'm going.

The fisherman

I would like to share a story of a fisherman, Bob, who lived close to a river. Bob was a good Christian man who had a family to support. He made a meager living in the town near by and supplemented his provisions with fish he caught in the river. He was a quiet man who lived in peace with himself and others and was respected for his kindness and generosity.

Every now and then a hobo, Jack, would pass by when he was fishing. “Dear Sir, would spare a fish for a lonely man who has no food?” asked Jack each time he passed by. Bob was slightly repelled by the odour and dress of the hobo, but was filled with compassion for Jack and gave him a few fish that he could not really do without, and God knew this.

One day when Jack came by and asked for some fish, Bob gave him some fish and wished him well on his journey. After Jack left Bob heard a voice asking him “Why do you give Jack fish?”. Bob was astonished by the question and looked around for the owner of the question.

When he did not see anyone he knew who it was. His reply was “But Father, I have compassion for Jack, what more can I do?”. There was no reply, which mystified him. That night during his prayer time Bob asked our Father what he needed to do. Once again he got no answer.

The Great Commandment

A few weeks later when Jack came by again Bob had forgotten about the question. After Bob gave Jack some fish Bob heard the question again. Once again Bob was puzzled. He had a restless night that night and didn't know what else he could do.

The third time Jack came by Bob remembered the question our Father had asked him. When Jack asked him for some fish Bob was about to give him some and then 'the penny dropped' and he understood the question. Bob's reply was "No, I'm not giving you any fish. But come and sit beside me and I will teach you how to catch fish". Mildly surprised by the request Jack sat down. Bob got a long branch and line and a hook with some food scrap attached, and gave it to Jack, and showed him what to do.

While they were fishing Bob was able to share his story about his own life and share his experiences with Jack. Jack was a lonely person and related his own story with tears in his eyes. No one had ever stopped to listen to his story. Jack's story touched Bob in a way that he had never experienced before. Bob felt a bond of Love between Jack and himself that came from the Holy Spirit, and from out of nowhere he started talking about Jesus.

As the time passed by Bob felt a change in Jack. Jack felt different. Jack felt his burden being lifted of him. For the first time in his life Jack felt Loved.

A few hours later after they both caught some fish Bob invited Jack to his humble home to share a meal and prayer time with his family. Jack was welcome into Bob's home anytime he passed by.

And God was pleased, both Bob and Jack were blessed, and richer for the experience. Bob did not need to give Jack any fish anymore. Jack was empowered in being able to provide for himself and others, and shared the message of Jesus whenever he was led by the Spirit.

How will you respond when our Father calls?

Am I Available...

- to Surrender to Others?
- to Forgive Others?
- to Listen to Others?
- to Receive from Others?
- to Learn from Others?
- to Grow with Others?
- to Care for Others?
- to Love Others?

The Fruit of the Spirit

Love is a seed that God plants in us. The fruit of that seed is Love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness and faithfulness.

“3Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. 8Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times.” (Mark 4:3-8)

Love has been planted in ourselves through the Holy Spirit. It must be attended to properly or it will not survive. God is the Father that we can ask for support and guidance when we fail. We are nothing without him. God is pleased when he sees his work yield worthy fruit.

Love is a sacrifice. Just as the farmer, we need to prepare the ground in ourselves and others. We need to turn the ground over and remove the rocks and other impurities from the soil. We need to be able to provide water and nourishment, protect it from the pests and storms as it grows to maturity. We need to nurture the seed so it can grow strong and healthy so it will bare such mighty fruit that all will be astounded.

Sometimes this is easy. For some God has been preparing their ground since their birth through their life experiences. Mostly it requires hard work and frustration. Birds and insects pick the young buds and disease will strike at the roots and branches and yield sour fruit. We need to be vigilant and be able to decrease or eradicate any threat to the young plant until its roots deepen and its branches strengthen. If a plant or a crop fails, we need to learn from our experiences and start again.

For others, it's rocky and barren. Nothing will ever grow there, no matter how hard we try.

Love is something that takes us our whole life to learn and put in practice. Just when we think we have it right we become complacent and self-righteous. Satan then comes along and moves the goal posts. This is true, I have found this out from my personal experiences the hard way. We may think we have the answer, but we don't. We can only do our best and leave the rest to God.

Love is not a formula that we can unpack and apply to any situation. It is something learned from experience. Of course we are going to make mistakes. We need to adapt to different situations. We are not perfect and God knows this.

It is only through Jesus, through prayer and meditation, that we can have a relationship with our Father. When we ask him how we can Love others, he will show us.

Love is patient...

- Not jumping to conclusions or making rash decisions.
- If we cannot be **Patient** with ourselves how can we be Patient with others?

Patience is self-control in every circumstance.

Patience is giving others the benefit of doubt, even when we feel uncomfortable.

Patience is trying to understand others point of view.

Patience is waiting for something to happen with eager anticipation.

Patience allows us to realise our goal.

It can be very hard to be patient in the world. Things happen that are out of our control that have an impact on our expectations, plans and goals in life. We have our own ideas about how we should be treated by others and if someone does not behave according to those expectations, or something happens that we don't like, we can lose the plot and become frustrated and angry with others or at a situation that we can't control.

When impatience gets the better of us we focus of our own feelings and desires, we don't want to see others point of view, it's all about me. Impatience can lead to frustration, which can lead to self-centeredness, which can lead to increased stress and ill health, which can lead to anger and resentment, which can lead to a loss of reasoning and self-control, which can lead to extreme violence.

I remember when I really needed something that was really important to me. The more I didn't have it, the more I wanted it. It was destroying me. I used to Pray... "Farther, please give me patience NOW. I need it NOW." This is true, I have prayed this many times, and I suspect there are a lot of others that have done the same. Now that I'm older I can see Father smiling at me and saying to me "My son, you already have it. You are welcome to use it whenever you want to."

It's like a car in our garage that we know it's there. We look at it and think it's a beautiful thing we have got. One day someone comes along and says "Wow what a great car. What's it like to drive?". "What do you mean?" you reply, "How do you drive it?". Isn't Patience a bit like the car in the garage? It's always been there but we never use it, or, don't we know how to use it. I'm still learning how to use it properly.

I remember when I was a child my mother dropped me off at school. She said she would pick me when school was out at the end of the day. I remember going to the place where I was dropped off and waiting for her return. I waited and waited and waited, and waited (even a short time is a long time for a child), and finally she came. While I was waiting, all sorts of things came to mind. She forgot, she was sick, she had an accident, and worst of all, she had abandoned me. But I had no choice, I could not do anything but to have Faith that she would arrive. And finally she did. She apologised and explained why she was late. My Faith in her was restored.

Sometimes impatience can still get the better of me. I still struggle when I am driving. There are so many people that are inattentive and have little regard for others on the road. I get frustrated with slow drivers that think everyone else should behave the same as they do. I really don't understand why some people drive at 75ks on the freeway on a Saturday afternoon.

When I get a speeding ticket, or are cut off by someone else or stuck in traffic I may try to justify my actions by saying that I am late or some other lame excuse, and swear and curse at the officer, the other driver or the traffic. Don't we ever think that it's God's way of slowing us down.

Do we ever think about the consequences of our actions and what could have happened? Doesn't God do this to us all the time. His ways are perfect. He knows us better than we know ourselves.

I prefer to arrive early to an appointment or function to allow for unseen events that may happen. I can't see the point of leaving late. If I am travelling with another person and they are late, or like to take their time and not feel rushed, I feel uncomfortable and want to hurry them up. The other person may feel that I am pushing him and then becomes impatient with me.

How often do we try to explain something to someone over and over again and they still don't get it. They may ask the same question a number of times. Is this because the person just doesn't understand what we are

saying because they are not listening? This happens a lot of times. Or, is it because we have not thought it through ourselves and assume the person knows what we are talking about and become impatient with the person because they can't read our thoughts. I am guilty of this. I do it all the time.

When we take on a project we look for the right advice and then become impatient with ourself and angry with the next person that comes along when things go wrong. We may find other issues and problems we did not know or expect. We expect everything to go as we anticipate. We get frustrated with ourselves and others. The more we try to fix things when we are impatient, the worse things get.

When we fail in our project, how often do we curse ourselves and say "Im a failure, Ill never make it.", or, "You're a failure, you will never make it."

Shouldn't we bless our selves and others "Its OK, I have Faith I'll get it the next time." We have Faith in our Father that he will get us through our impatience. We need to rest and take a deep breath, put aside the frustration and disappointment, and start again when we are the right Spirit. We need to be in a quiet peaceful place, in prayer, where our Spirit is with our Father. This gives us authority over impatience so that the next time it happens we have the experience, and tools, to manage it properly.

When we are impatient with others dosen't our Father slow us down, or, wait until we ask him what to do. I have often asked Father "*Am I really doing the right thing?*" and he will speak to me through others to support me and help me in my time of need. My Faith in him is restored.

Patience comes from a Faith and confidence that things will work out the way they should, even if they are not what we may have expected, or even wanted. A spoiled child may be given whatever they want, whenever they want. Do they learn about Patience? Patience needs to be experienced rather than learned. Today we live in an instant society. We don't need to put the time and effort into anything nowadays. Some Christians may look for instant gratification, they want it now, and become disapointed or lose Faith when it dosen't happen immediately.

Faith is like a bus timetable. We see on the timetable that the bus we want to catch will arrive at a certain time and dutifully arrive at the bus stop a few minutes before the arrival time of the bus. We wait and there is no bus. What has happened? Do we just leave the bus stop and vow never to return? Do we get angry with the others around us? Do we wait a bit more for the bus and then storm off? Or, do we have Faith that the bus will arrive eventually? Do we loose Faith completely if the bus never arrives?

Our Fathers timing is perfect. It is his in timing and not ours.

"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1)

"Father please forgive me of my sin. Please show me how to be Patient with myself and others. Let your Peace and Love for others be in my heart. Let your Spirit be in this situation and let your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

Love is kind...

- Gentleness, compassion, giving, not jealous or envious.
- Kindness is something experienced and not Learned.
- If we cannot be **Kind** to ourselves how can we be Kind to others?

“15 But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.” (Psalm 86:15 NIV).

“34 Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’” (Matthew 25: 34-36).

Kindness comes from understanding the needs of others. Kindness is a deep compassion for others. Did Jesus heal the sick because he was told to do it? Unfortunately we need to be told, it is not in our nature. We need to do it intentionally again and again until it becomes a part of who we are.

Anything we do to ourselves or others come from the mind. The seeds of our thoughts come from our own expectations and experiences in life and how we have previously learned to cope with similar situations in the past. We generally treat ourselves and others the way we have treated ourselves and others before. It is an accustomed response because that’s all we know. We need to learn a different behaviour.

We need to understand that seeking vengeance or hurting others does not achieve anything. It may be a temporary solution. When we have gentleness and compassion for others we can help carry their burden. We begin to see their pain and bitterness. They feel Loved. They feel that there is someone they can talk to without being judged. We can share our own story and build a bond in Love. When they have peace and Love in their heart they can begin to Love themselves. We can encourage them to think about all the wonderful things that they have been blessed with.

It’s the greedy, the angry, the hated, the despised and unloved we need to reach out to in Love. We need to show them that there is another way to live. We can give them shelter or something to help them through their time of need. We show them God’s mercy and Love. We can tell them that they are not alone. We can tell them that there is a God with a confidence that can only come from a relationship with Jesus.

“7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.” (1 John 4: 7-12 NIV)

When we have a genuine unconditional Love for another, we lose our own sense of self. We die to self. There is no anger, jealousy, envy or greed. We may experience something we have never experienced before.

Father please forgive me of my sin. Please show me how to be Kind to myself and others. Let your Peace and Love for others be in my heart. Let your Spirit be in this situation and let your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”

Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude...

- Humility, modest, not proud or rude or arrogant.
- If we cannot be **Humble** with ourselves how can we be Humble with others?

When we are attacked for doing wrong, shouldn't we be humble. When we are attacked for doing what is right, shouldn't we have the Joy of the Lord who already knows what we do (1 Peter 3:14-17).

“Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”

(Philippians 2:3 ESV).

Humility in action... (From: <https://www.dougbrittonbooks.com/onlinebiblestudies-selfworthandrespect/meaningofhumilityinthebible-humbleinbible/>)

- You can defuse arguments when you are humble.
- You can handle unfair treatment peacefully when you are humble.
- You do not have to put on a “false front” when you are humble.
- You can eat “humble pie” without being crushed when you are humble.
- You can ask for forgiveness when you are humble.
- You can talk with the right attitude when you are humble.

“Oh Lord, it's hard to be humble when I'm perfect in every way” Song.

“Father please forgive me of my sin. Please show me how to be Humble with myself and others. Let your Peace and Love for others be in my heart. Let your Spirit be in this situation and let your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”

Love does not demand its own way...

- None judging, non demanding, accepting ourselves and others for who we/they are.
- If we cannot be **Accepting** with ourselves how can we be Accepting with others?

“Father please forgive me of my sin. Please show me how to be Accepting to myself and others. Let your Peace and Love for others be in my heart. Let your Spirit be in this situation and let your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”

Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged...

- Forgiving, Not holding past transgressions against ourselves and others.
- If we cannot be **Forgiving** with ourselves how can we Forgive others?

Forgiveness starts with recognising our own sin of unforgiveness of their sin against us.

Forgiveness is compassion for ourselves and others.

Forgiveness is kind-heartedness to ourselves and others.

Forgiveness is tolerating the behaviour of ourselves and the behaviour of others.

Shouldn't we bless the ones that curse us?

Shouldn't we bless the ones that hurt us?

Jesus died on the cross for our sins. Shouldn't we forgive them of their sins against us, as we were forgiven of our sins?

Shouldn't we just Love them?

There are 2 things that happen when we feel hurt by events or actions against us.

1. Emotional pain: We can become emotionally attached to the event.
We can let it conquer us, or we can conquer it. We can let it pass through us and move on.
2. Physiological Pain: The mind remembers the event.
Our whole life can revolve around the event, or,
We can learn from the experience and help others in their time of need.

How often do we condemn or crucify ourselves over what we have done to ourselves? We may work out at a Gym to lose weight and then walk past an icecream shop and indulge in a few sweets. Later on we may say to ourself ***“I should never have had those treats.”***, ***“I’m a failure.”***, ***“I hate my self.”*** There is judgement and unforgiveness in our heart.

Shouldn’t we forgive ourselves and say ***“It’s ok I will try to go another way next time.”*** After a few unsuccessful attempts at this, we finally get the message. For some this may take a long time and they may need lots of encouragement from others. To say to ourselves ***“I am a failure.”*** is like a death sentence.

How often do we feel that we have nothing to forgive ourself for? That person did wrong to us and we didn’t do anything wrong to that person. Don’t we feel hurt by that person and have unforgiveness in our heart against that person because they did to us. Our sin is taking offence when the person did nothing wrong in the first place and lash out without thinking.

Most of the time the other person is totally unaware that they have hurt us through their words or actions. We need to let the other person know how they have hurt us, ***“I feel upset that you said that.”***, or, ***“I feel that I am being judged.”***, or, ***“I am not feeling respected”***, or, ***“I am unhappy that you feel that way.”***

Most importantly don’t accuse the other person of anything. That’s when we invite Satan to join us.

Sometimes we are unaware that we have hurt another person. When a person says something totally unexpected or lashes out because of something we have said or done to them, do we become offended and tell them ***“You have a rebellious Spirit”***, or, ***“Stop complaining and MAN up.”***? Or do we just brush it off with ***“Your just being silly.”***, or, ***“Grow up, and stop being a spoilt child.”*** Isn’t it better to say ***“I’m sorry, please forgive me. How did I upset you?”***

If we can’t recognise the unforgiveness in our own heart how can our Father forgive us?

“30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” (Ephesians 4: 30-32 NIV)

True forgiveness cannot be forced. It can only come from a compassionate heart. This comes from the Holy Spirit. We need to change our thinking. We need to speak life over ourselves and others. We need to deliberately change our thought patterns. It is the Spirit we battle with. Love can be very difficult when we hold on to past negative experiences and destructive memories.

The beginning of this process can be very challenging. We need to be able to let go. We try to forgive them, but there is still that small seed of unforgiveness against them. We need to recognise our own sin, before we can let go of any sin against others. It’s only then that we can forgive them. We need to forgive our selves of our own anger and unforgiveness before we can forgive others.

God is patiently waiting for us to acknowledge our sin of unforgiveness. He can not do anything until we do. For some this is really hard to do. They have had a lifetime of abuse and don’t know any other way. They

may need to consciously ask God to show them how to Love that person or people. They may need to look for the good in others and not the evil. They may need to do this intentionally again and again and again until they feel forgiveness in their heart.

God will deal with the emotional experience, but will leave the physical memory as a warning to us, or to protect us from further damage. God can turn the experience into a blessing if we let him. We can use this blessing to support and encourage others in their needs. We can help carry their burden because we have come out the other side stronger and better equipped to deal with it.

Most of the time, when we say something to another, we don't understand the power of our words or actions. We may say or do something out of total innocence, but, the other person will take it as an offence or judgement against them or their belief. They may be in a dark place and only see and hear anything as another brick in their wall. It's not their fault.

They may lash out at us because of the pain and suffering they are going through. It's not really their fault. Most of the time it's because they really don't know what they are doing, they are on autopilot. I remember a saying "***It takes two to Tango***", that, "***Both parties involved in a situation or argument are equally responsible for it.***" (<https://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/it-takes-two-to-tango>). Aren't we responsible for our own actions in what we say and do to others.

“... 25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.” (1 Corinthians 12:25-27)

Sometimes, it doesn't matter what we say or do, things just get worse. We can try prayer, healing, fasting, encouragement etc., but nothing happens. I'm not saying that we should give up on the person, of course we should pray for a breakthrough. We should carry each others burdens. We should be there for others. In time, and with lots of Love and Faith, the person will make it through.

We may say “That person has backslidden, is possessed, or any number of other things.” Little do we know about what is going on inside that person. Are we not speaking a curse over that person when we say those things. Yes, there are Demonic forces out there and do create a lot of suffering amongst Christians, and people are possessed, but, we need to be sure about what we say to others. Maybe they just need some TLC. A friend to share with without judgement or condemnation.

I remember a few years ago I was in this same place. I was in darkness and did not have any hope. Whatever anyone said to me was like a death sentence. I was lucky I met some kind people at a Church and helped me through.

“Father please forgive me of my sin. Please show me how to Forgive myself and others. Let your Peace and Love for others be in my heart. Let your Spirit be in this situation and let your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”

Love does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out...

- Maintains justice, honest to ourselves and others.
- If we cannot be **Honest** with ourselves how can we be Honest with others?

We all have our own understanding of what Justice is. We mostly see Justice as a way to receive compensation for some hurt or misfortune that someone has done to us. It becomes personal, we can only see our side of the disagreement and how we have been hurt. Because our feelings are self-centred we can lose sight of the bigger picture and deny the truth about what actually happened.

“Father please forgive me of my sin. Please show me how to be Honest with myself and others. Let your Peace and Love for others be in my heart. Let your Spirit be in this situation and let your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”

Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance...

- Lasting, persistent, bears all things.
- If we cannot be **Enduring** with ourselves how can we be Enduring with others?

“Father please forgive me of my sin. Please show me how to endure myself and others. Let your Peace and Love for others be in my heart. Let your Spirit be in this situation and let your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”