Fellowship with God

Volume Three

By Max Klein

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Foreword

(From ‘Fellowship with God, Volume One)

The greatest commandment given to all believers in Jesus Christ is the command to love God. As believers we are also commanded “to grow in the knowledge and grace of Jesus Christ”. Without correct understanding of Bible doctrine it is impossible to fulfill these commandments, and the believer will continue to fail in the spiritual life. The great Christians are not necessarily those who have the most prominent positions in the church, or who show themselves to be constantly busy in Christian service, or who sing and pray the loudest during the worship service. This collection of essays helps us to understand that the great Christians are those who are humble enough to obey God’s commands, learning and applying the word of God, and growing to spiritual maturity by developing an intimate and continuous fellowship with Him through means of both Bible doctrine in the soul and the filling of the Holy Spirit. These Christians are the ‘winner- believers’ of the Church age, the believers who have attained spiritual fulfillment, passed all forms of faith-testing, and who maintain continually focused on the person of Christ. Only the winner-believer has the capacity to receive maximum blessings from God while giving glory to Him before both men and angels alike.

Acknowledgement

The author has studied under the teaching ministry of R. B. Thieme Jr., his faithful pastor for over 40 years. During that time Max has learned many biblical principles and doctrinal truths which have given him a clear understanding of the spiritual life. It is this spiritual life that Max desires to explain in simple written form that others may also come to know the spiritual life that God has provided for all believers in Jesus Christ.

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How to Learn!

How much does the average high school or college student remember three years after graduation? He could probably fill five sheets of paper with what he remembers from his many years of study, and that is tragic. Even though the average brain is equivalent to a thousand super computers, the typical person remembers very little. His memory storage in his stream of consciousness is nearly empty. If he were confined to a room for a week without a computer, cellular phone, television, or books he would probably go mad since he has no valuable or interesting information in his memory storage to entertain himself in such a situation. What is the reason for having a poor memory?

Many people study history in school for many years, yet they cannot discuss history for even five minutes without exhausting all of their historical knowledge. Is there something wrong with their super computers? No, there is nothing wrong with the average mental computer, the problem is in the program. The program is giving wrong commands to the computer and consequently the student is unable to develop a system of knowledge. The proper steps for developing a system of knowledge in ones memory are as follows:

1. Concentration for the purpose of understanding
2. Understanding (short term memory)
3. Much repetition (needed to establish long term memory)
4. Correlation (new knowledge is related to old knowledge)
5. Systematization (the result of all the pertinent knowledge of a subject having been put into long term memory and correlated)

In contrast to systematized learning, the average person learns and forgets and then learns something else which he also forgets. He may remember a few fragments of knowledge here and there,
but he never develops a systematic framework of knowledge. His understanding which is short term memory disintegrates as he continues to learn new things. There is never enough repetition to develop any long term memory and thus he cannot build a system of knowledge. This type of person is impressed with how many things he has studied and how many degrees he has, yet he hardly knows anything.

Several years ago, I taught a basic Greek course to a group of students. On the first day of class I presented the text-book we would be using to the students. One student immediately remarked that she had completed that book before in a seminary class and had gotten a good grade. It turned out that this student knew none of the information in that Greek text. She was quite skillful in memorizing information long enough to take a test, but as soon as the test was finished, she forgot everything. She emphasized short term memory and good grades. She was an ‘A’ student who knew nothing. What a person learns and forgets will not help that person in life.

A soldier may learn everything about his rifle. He may learn well how to correct a malfunctioning rifle. He may even get the best grade in a class dealing with that subject. However, if he should forget how to correct a malfunctioning rifle in battle, he will die. Let’s imagine the following battlefield situation: the enemy is charging toward a soldier’s position; he begins to shoot at the charging soldiers but suddenly his rifle jams. He is becoming more and more terrified as the enemy gets closer and closer. Under this pressure he cannot remember how to correct this malfunction. Although he had done well on this subject at military school, he had subsequently forgotten it. Because his training program failed to inculcate his training through the use of repetition, he will die in combat.

What one learns and forgets does one no good. All good teachers incorporate repetition in their teaching. If a teacher does not repeat, he is not a good teacher. What is the purpose of teaching a lot of material if the students don’t remember it? The same is true of a good pastor. If the minister does not teach and repeat many times, his teaching will not be effective. The members of his congregation may boast about how interesting his messages are, but if they cannot remember the content it will not be beneficial to their spiritual lives.

All good Christian students must find academically and spiritually prepared pastors who are willing to study hard daily and teach the Word of God on a consistent and systematic basis, using plenty of repetition so that Bible doctrine becomes inculcated into the soul. A good student must learn from a good pastor-teacher.

The “Pleroma” of God’s Blessing

Philippians 4:19 / Ephesians 3:19

4:19. And my God will keep on fulfilling your every need on the basis of his riches in glory by [ἐν / en] agency of Christ Jesus [the one who distributes blessings to the mature believers].
“Keep on fulfilling” (the Greek verb πληροω / ‘plerō-,’ being future progressive in form) is a cognate of the Greek noun πληρωμα ‘pleroma’ (fullness). ‘Pleroma’ is found in such important phrases as “in the fullness of the blessing of Christ” (Rom. 15:29) and in the phrase “all the fullness [of blessing] from God” (Eph. 3:19).

God wants to give every Church Age believer his fullness of blessing, not only because He loves the believer with an infinite personal love, but because His bestowal of blessing to the believer is glorifying to God. However, in order to receive the fullness of blessing from God, the Christian must fulfill God’s plan. You can be assured therefore, that as long as you desire to fulfill God’s plan, God will faithfully “keep on fulfilling your every need.” In other words, God will provide every spiritual resource (providing for your spiritual needs) and logistical provision (providing for your physical needs) necessary for you to complete the spiritual life, at which time you will receive the fullness of His blessing.

As we have seen before (see Fellowship with God, Volume One, Chapter Six), it takes two columns to advance toward spiritual maturity, i.e. the doctrinal column and the reciprocal love column. If the Christian tries to advance spiritually without daily perception of accurate teaching of the Word, he will be led astray by his sin nature and his emotions, not to mention demonic influence and false doctrine which prevails in all areas of society including non-doctrinal churches. If the Christian tries to advance without developing appreciation, obedience, respect and devotion for the members of the Godhead, he will not have the motivation to pass all the trials and testings he must face before he can complete the spiritual life.

The Christian must advance with two simultaneous columns. All during your Christian life, God will keep on providing everything you need to keep those two columns moving, in other words, He will “keep on fulfilling your every need.” While God can and does supply even the most negative believer with his physical needs (food, clothing and shelter), the believer also needs Bible doctrine to maintain his spiritual life (Matt. 4:4). However, if the Christian is not willing to learn the Word of God or is not willing to spend the time to develop a love for God, then of course God will be unable to supply his every need.

“His riches in Glory” is the love of God in eternity past for the Christian and everything the love of God has provided for him. This is the greatest wealth that has ever existed. The greatest wealth that a person can possess is to understand God’s love for him and to respond to it.

The Greek word “en” can be translated “in” or “by.” The context demands the translation, “by agency of Christ Jesus.” When the believer applies the spiritual life which the humanity of Christ utilized during those 33 years on the earth, and when the believer responds to the love which Christ has for him, he will be able to keep these two columns moving toward the objective of completing the spiritual life. The spiritual objective is possessing maximum integrity in the soul which is equivalent to possessing maximum love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Anger

Anger is a sin which expresses antagonism, hatred, exasperation, resentment, and irrationality. It can be based on thinking, or emotional, or both. The Greek word “orge” is anger based on thought;
the word “thumos” is anger based on emotion. Both types of anger are reactions to someone or something causing a bitter reaction and resulting in irrational thought, speech or action. Anger motivates gossip, judging, maligning, hatred, revenge, cruelty, violence and murder.

Some people might justify their anger (or any other sin) by saying it is a ‘natural reaction’ that can’t be stopped. This kind of thinking indicates a failure to take responsibility for your own thinking and behavior. To show that anger results from a volitional decision to become angry, let me present the following true story: One time a man was made to appear before a judge and sentenced for reckless driving, a result of his ‘road-rage’. As part of his punishment he was ordered to seek psychiatric help to control his anger. At the first session he explained to the psychiatrist that there was no way he would ever cure his road-rage because it was an uncontrollable reaction, occurring every time some other driver cut in front of him. The psychiatrist suggested that they go for a drive, and as they approached the freeway the psychiatrist said to the man (who was driving the car) “Every time a car cuts in front of you, I will give you 20 dollars.” Not long after that a car cut in front of them, but instead of getting angry the man was happy - of course!

In this instance the man was motivated by the promise of money not to become angry, but for the Christian the motivation to not become angry (or to commit any other sin) is far greater than money: peace and stability in the soul, escape from divine discipline, and the opportunity to advance in the spiritual life.

Principles and scripture verses related to anger:

1. Anger and cruelty are sometimes related to jealousy:

“Wrath is fierce [cruel] and anger is a flood [affects all in its periphery], but who can stand against jealousy [a powerfully evil motivation]” (Proverbs 27:4).

These sins are mentioned in the same verse since they are related to one another. A jealous person easily becomes angry when crossed, and that anger can become extreme anger (wrath) which can develop into a desire for vengeance and vengeance can be mercilessly cruel. In this relationship, the power base is jealousy.

2. Anger is related to stupidity:

“Do not be hasty to be angry in your heart [soul] for anger resides in the bosom of fools.” (Ecclesiastes 7:9)

A person is never able to think rationally when angry, which is why many stupid and embarrassing things are said in anger. If you become angry easily under pressure you are a stupid fool. You are a fool because you have not learned to think under pressure. A fool becomes emotional under pressure; a wise person thinks under pressure.
3. While an individual’s volition is the source of anger, the sin nature provides the temptation to become angry:

“Now, the works [actions] of the flesh [sin nature] are plainly seen [perceptible; can be understood] which are ... antagonisms [hostile feelings and actions toward others related to pettiness], strife [discord] jealousy, outburst of anger. . .” (Galatians 5:19, 20).

4. An angry and hot-tempered person is a trouble maker:

"An angry person stirs up strife, and a hot tempered person abounds in transgression" (Proverbs 29:22).

5. Anger destroys a nation:

“So decrees the Lord, ‘For three sins of [the nation of] Edom, even for four, I will not revoke its punishment because he pursued his brother [the descendants of Jacob] with a sword, stifling all compassion, because his anger raged continually, and he maintained his anger forever’” (Amos 1:11).

6. Anger is associated with grieving the Holy Spirit:

“Stop grieving the Holy Spirit, the God by whom you have been sealed to the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and slander be removed from you along with all malice” (Ephesians 4:30, 31).

7. The Christian is commanded to remove anger from his lifestyle:

“But now you also put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth” (Colossians 3:8).

8. Anger hinders effective prayer:

“Therefore, I desire that men in every place pray, lifting up holy hands [Jewish tradition] without anger and dissension” (1 Timothy 2:8).

9. Do not associate with a person who easily becomes angry:

If you do, you will take on his characteristics and easily get into trouble:

“Do not associate with a man [become friends] given to anger or go with a hot-tempered man, or you will learn his ways and find a snare for yourself.” (Proverbs 22:24, 25).

“You keep on being angry [the present active indicative second person plural: ὀργίζεσθε / orgizeste] [so] stop sinning [the Ephesians were in a state of anger: Ephesians 4:31]. Stop letting the sun go down on your anger.” (Ephesians 4:26)

“You are angry:” The Greek verb “orgizeste” can be either the present active imperative (“Be angry”) or the present active indicative (“You are angry”) since both these grammatical forms are spelt
the same way in Greek. Now, which translation makes more sense to you: “Be angry” or “You are angry”? Some English Bibles actually have the command, “Be angry.” This translation is totally ridiculous because in effect it is saying that Paul is commanding the Ephesians to be angry, and then a few verses later Paul is contradicting himself by commanding the Ephesians to remove anger from their souls: “All bitterness: all emotional anger, all wrath [mental anger: the Greek word “orge”. . . must be removed from you along with all malice.”] Rather, Paul recognizes that they are angry and commands them to stop being angry since anger is a sin which destroys the spiritual life.

“So stop sinning:” In the next clause, Paul used the Greek negative “μη/το” with the present imperative. The present tense means you are doing it now; the imperative with the negative means to stop doing what you are doing.

“Stop letting the sun go down on your anger:” Many of the Ephesians were not just angry for a moment but were in a state of anger which perhaps continued for weeks, or months, or possibly even for years. So, Paul commanded them to confess their sins of anger before going to sleep. Never let anger persist beyond a day.

Remember that you are responsible for your attitude, and therefore have no right to blame anyone else if you do get angry. While a person or organization may commit an injustice against you, this is no excuse to get angry. Rather, it is an opportunity to apply Bible doctrine that you might pass the test placed before you and advance in your spiritual walk.

Whenever you are tempted to become angry, you must meditate on God’s solutions and your relationship with the Lord. In this way, David was able to prevent the temptation of anger from becoming a sin. Although David was being treated unfairly, he was able to maintain his experiential righteousness through the application of God’s Word to his situation.

“Tremble with reaction or agitation [to some injustice], yet do not sin; Meditate in your heart [on Bible doctrine in your soul] upon your bed and be still [no retaliation]. Selah” (Psalm 4:4).

**Eternal Rewards**

2 Timothy 2:11-13

Our salvation does not depend upon our faithfulness, but on the faithfulness of God.

2 Timothy 2:11 “Faithful is the Word [a title for the Lord: John 1:1]. If we died with Him [identified with Christ’s substitutionary spiritual death], and we have, we will live with him [in eternity].”

The conditional sentences in verses 2 Timothy 11-13 are all first class. The first class conditional sentence states a fact or what is assumed to be true. Paul is stating that at salvation, we were identified with the substitutionary spiritual death of Jesus Christ on the cross (Romans 6). In this first class conditional sentence, the ‘if clause’ (protasis) is true, so therefore the main clause (apodosis) must also be true. It’s a fact that all believers will live with Jesus Christ forever.
2 Timothy 2:12 “If we endure [ὑπομένω / hupomeno - keep advancing spiritually through the pressures and tests in life to the point of completing the spiritual life], we will rule with him [in the Millennial Kingdom]. If we reject [ἀρνέομαι / arneomai] Him [if the Christian rejects the spiritual life for lack of knowledge of God’s Word, he rejects Christ] He will deny us [i.e. deny us the greater rewards in the Millennium and in the Eternal State].

The Greek verb ‘hupomeno’ means to persist even though under a burden, to stand firm under pressure and testing. The Christian can only accomplish this if he applies God’s Word via the 10 Problem Solving Devises to his pressures, troubles, problems and tests of life. Thus, in order to complete the spiritual life, the believer must be able to handle all the pressures of life so as not to be distracted and to pass God’s tests related to Providential Suffering, Momentum Testing and Evidence Testing. When the believer accomplishes this, he has become an invisible hero and will receive maximum blessing both in time and in eternity. (See the book, Christian Suffering by R.B. Thieme Jr. for a detailed explanation of the different categories of testing related to undeserved suffering.)

The greatest believers will be rulers of nations; the next level down will probably rule provinces, etc. If you calculate the approximate number of nations and provinces that will exist in the Millennium and put that against all the Christians in the Church Age, you will come to realize that we are dealing with a very small percentage of Church Age believers. To most believers the Lord could say, “This granting of rulership does not apply to you since your knowledge of the spiritual life could easily be transferred to a mosquito’s brain with much room to spare, and your motivational level is less than that of a koala.”

The Greek word ‘ἀρνέομαι: arneomai’ means to deny, to reject, to refuse etc. Most Christians reject learning Bible doctrine, which is the thinking of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16). These Christians have therefore rejected (denied) Christ (If you reject someone’s thinking, you reject that person in the sense of wanting to know that person.) If the Christian rejects Christ in time, the Lord will deny him the greater blessings both in time and in eternity.

2 Timothy 2:13 “If we are unfaithful [fail to advance in the spiritual life], he remains faithful for he cannot deny himself.”

However, even though a Christian may be totally unfaithful to Jesus Christ in time, he is still in union with Jesus Christ. Therefore, for Jesus Christ to reject the believer (in union with Him) is to reject himself. This is why Jesus Christ said to Paul on the road to Damascus, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me (Acts 9:4b)? Since Paul was persecuting Christians who were in union with Christ, he was persecuting Christ.

Though he falls [believer’s failure], he will not be completely cast down [will not lose his salvation], because the Lord [possessing perfect faithfulness] is the one who sustains him with his hands. (Psalm 37:24)
The Team Concept
Every Member is a Gifted Genius

When God created the spiritual life for the Church Age believer, he placed all the believers into a team. Therefore, we must understand how this team functions, and how this team becomes a great team. No team ever functions well together and becomes a winning team without a lot of training and respect for authority.

The team in the Bible is described as the body and its leader is called the head. Jesus Christ is the head and all Christians make up the body, the universal Church of Jesus Christ. At salvation, God the Holy Spirit gives each believer a spiritual gift. This spiritual gift determines what position the Christian plays on the team. Using the analogy of an American-football team, not every player can be the quarterback; not every player can be the running back and carry the ball. Some players must do the blocking, some must do the tackling. This same concept applies within the universal Church. Not every believer can be a pastor, or evangelist, or be effective in the area of local church administration or providing care for others (the gift of helps). Yet every position is important. Furthermore, the team is not going to be an effective and winning team unless they train hard, namely learn the word of God well and develop humility that they might accept the authority of their leader.

1 Corinthians 12:1 “Now (δε /de!) concerning spiritual gifts brethren, I do not wish you to be ignorant.”

At salvation every believer was given a spiritual gift by the Holy Spirit. The Greek word χαρισμα (charisma, eg. verse 4) means a gift freely and graciously given without any human merit. God forms the spiritual team through spiritual gifts. However, God did not give these gifts based on human merit, but on the basis of grace. None of us deserve to be on this team. Therefore, no member of the team has a right to boast about his spiritual gift.

In the Corinthian Church there was a great deal of ignorance regarding spiritual gifts, so that many Corinthians who had a sensational spiritual gift considered themselves better than other believers. This was sheer stupidity for one’s spiritual gift does not make one superior. One’s spiritual gift just determines what position he will play on the team.

Many churches use the expressions clergy and lay people (laity or ordinary believers). The Bible never uses these expressions. The church is a team made up of many spiritual gifts. As a believer matures spiritually his gift begins to function and he is then able to use his gift to serve the Lord in the position that he has been assigned. No believer is superior based on his spiritual gift and no Christian is an ordinary believer.

Many pastors will not teach their congregation technical theological words and systematic theology because they consider their congregation as inferior and not qualified to understand these things. This is totally incorrect. Every believer is a member of the royal family of God, a royal priest and ambassador of Christ (1 Peter 2:5, 9; 2 Cor. 5:20).
As a priest he must learn all the technical vocabulary and doctrines in Scripture in order to represent himself before the throne of God correctly. As an ambassador he cannot fulfill his role as the Lord’s representative to people unless he is highly educated in the matters of the Gospel and the spiritual life. So, every believer is given a human spirit and the Filling of the Spirit. The human spirit (capable of learning all spiritual information) and the Filling of the Spirit (supernatural power) means that every believer is a spiritual genius, having the necessary spiritual I.Q to understand every category of Bible doctrine, including advanced systematic theology and all the technical theological words found in Scripture. There is no such a person as an ordinary Christian.

(This article has been extracted from a more complete explanation of Spiritual Gifts as outlined in of Max’s commentary on 1 Corinthians, Chapter 12, available for download from www.maxklein.org)

The Pastor-Teacher
Leader or Manager?

In the local church, the leadership of the pastor is determined by his faithful and consistent study and teaching of Bible doctrine. The leader-pastor teaches the Word of God with much inculcation that his congregation might become dependent upon the principles and doctrine accumulated in their memory. He recognizes the privacy of the royal priesthood of each believer and avoids counseling or dictatorial functions that create dependency on him. Rather, through his teaching, he encourages dependency upon the Father’s plan, the ministry of the Holy Spirit and ones relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The leader-pastor teaches the Word to his congregation usually assembled as a group and does not violate the privacy of the individual members by individually asking them questions about their spiritual lives. The leader respects and defends the privacy of every member of the congregation.

The leader-pastor does not encourage dependency upon him nor does he set himself up as a role model. Rather through his teaching, the Lord Jesus Christ will become the role model for the members of his congregation who grow in grace and in knowledge, and the Holy Spirit will guide and counsel them. The leader encourages dependency on God.

On the other hand, the manager-pastor may or may not teach Bible doctrine, but he seeks to regulate, to control and to gain power over the members of his congregation in every way possible. He encourages counseling, leaning on him for advice. By doing this he creates a dependency on himself rather than a dependency on the Word of God. When a congregation is under the ministry of a manager-pastor, either they react to his control and regulations, or over-respond to his fatherly authority. If the congregation reacts, they will seek to malign, criticize, or judge him. If they over-respond, they will depend upon him for their role model. Both scenarios are detrimental to the local church and the individual believer.

Principles:
1. The only role model in the Christian way of life is Jesus Christ.

2. Jesus Christ cannot become the role model without consistent cognition of Bible doctrine.

3. No believer can reach spiritual maturity without a leader-pastor and without the free function of his volition.

4. Leadership requires authority and the respect of those under his authority. The leader-pastor establishes his authority through his faithful teaching of accurate Bible doctrine. The manager-pastor establishes his authority through control, regulation and his demand to be recognized as the authority of the Church.

5. The leader-pastor sets up policy and delegates authority to others for the administration of the local church. The manager-pastor cannot trust others, and so is constantly interfering in the function of his deacons.

6. Through the teaching of a leader-pastor, the members of the congregation are motivated by their respect and love for the members of the Godhead to do God’s will. However, through the counsel and the exhortations of the manager-pastor, church members are motivated to do the pastor’s will, namely: come to his worship service and prayer meetings, join in Church activities, and above all to give ten percent of their earnings every week.

7. The leader-pastor is concerned about the spiritual growth of the souls of his members, not the size of his congregation. The manager-pastor is concerned about the size of his congregation and how far his church building penetrates into the heavens. So, the manager-pastor often brags that his church is growing, meaning that new edifices are being constructed and more people are attending.

8. The leader-pastor explains through doctrine how to become experientially righteous. The manager-pastor teaches legalism, hypocrisy, and self-righteousness.

9. The leader-pastor seeks to protect the privacy of his congregation. The manager-pastor seeks to invade the privacy of his congregation.

10. The leader-pastor emphasizes the importance of knowing doctrine and having a love for God. He teaches his congregation the importance of correct thinking, motivation, decision making and how to apply the Word of God to every phase of the Christian life. The manager-pastor doesn’t teach the spiritual life, but emphasizes only the importance of Christian morality. In other words, the leader-pastor teaches every phase of the spiritual life, whereas the manager-pastor doesn’t. The manager-pastor does not place an emphasis on studying and teaching so the content of his message is not deep, but he vigorously exhorts his congregation to be good and moral.
11. The leader-pastor encourages a relationship with God, in this way the believer need never feel lonely. The manager-pastor fails to teach his congregation how to have a relationship with God and encourages social life within the local church instead. In this way the members of his congregation can always meet with other lonely people and feel much better about themselves.

12. The leader-pastor demonstrates his love for his congregation by his dedication to study and teaching. The manager-pastor demonstrates his lack of love for his congregation by his failure to properly teach the spiritual life to his congregation.

**Violent Crime**

Cause and Solution

Gen. 9:6 “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood will be shed. For in the image of God man was made.”

The root of all crime is sin. Many secular studies of criminal behavior place the blame on the criminal’s upbringing and environment. These studies tend to be very subjective, emphasizing the criminal’s point of view. When a criminal is asked “Why do you commit crime?” they will naturally blame their family, their schooling (or lack of it), their peers, the church or the government. However, the criminal’s actions, and their refusal to take responsibility for their actions is a direct result of the sin of arrogance.

Because of his arrogance the criminal has rejected all delegated authority from God, beginning with his parents’ authority during childhood and resulting in disorientation to all legitimate areas of authority in life such as school teachers, employers, commanding officers for those serving in the military, and law enforcement agencies. A more objective study of criminal behavior found that “over half the criminals (of the case-study group) come from stable families in which the parents have lived together, have raised the children, and have experienced the usual tensions in living... ...Many of the criminals, when children, rejected the people who attempted to show them affection and stabilize their homes.” (from *The Criminal Personality*, Yokelson and Saminov, Vol I, p119-20). All criminality is the product of human volition, the result of the individual using his free will to choose to disregard authority and to violate the freedom of another individual. A criminal must therefore be held responsible for his own decisions and actions.

Being created in the image of God means that man has a soul and is a rational creature. It means that man has self-consciousness, i.e., man is able to declare “I am,” just as God has declared “I am that I am” (Ex. 3:14) or just “I am” (Luk.22:70) for more dramatic effect. It also means man has moral reasoning power, i.e. “I ought”; and self-determination (volition), i.e., “I will.” All of these characteristics are violated by murder.

God’s perfect love includes his perfect justice. God is perfectly fair to all people. Therefore God inspired Moses to write, “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood will be shed.” This command to
execute those guilty of murder predates the Mosaic Law and is applicable to all dispensations, unlike adultery for example where the death penalty applied only during the Age of Israel (Lev. 20:10) and was rescinded by Christ during the age of the hypostatic union (John 8:3-11).

In the Gospel of Matthew, our Lord rebukes Peter for cutting off the ear of the servant of the high priest. “Return your sword to its scabbard, for all who draw [take up – λαμβάνω / lambano] the sword [unlawful violence] will die by the sword [capital punishment]” (Matt 26:52). The sword was a common method of execution practiced by the ruling Roman Empire. (Decapitation by sword was a method of execution for Roman citizens only, for example, according to Church tradition the Apostle Paul was executed in this manner by the order of Nero. For non-Roman citizens crucifixion was commonly used.) This statement of rebuke by Jesus Christ affirms the use of capital punishment by those in authority, as does Paul’s acknowledgment in his letter to the Romans: “For he [the one in authority] is God’s servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer” (Rom. 13:4).

Those who live by violence will die by violence. There are only three exceptions: law enforcement, the function of the military establishment, and the individual’s right to defend his life and property. We must also note that when Jesus reaffirmed the mandates of Moses he told the wealthy young man ‘You shall not murder’ (Matt. 19:18, Ex. 20:13). Killing in the line of duty and under authority of government is not murder, but is the exercise of justice to maintain freedom for innocent individuals in society. After the Second Advent of Christ and His Millennial reign upon earth, humankind will witness the execution of God’s justice firsthand: “Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword to strike down nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter” (Rev. 19:15a). (Additional information on the subject of murder can be found in The Book of James, A Commentary by Max Klein, pages 71-75, and Freedom through Military Victory by R. B. Thieme, Jr., pages 58-60).

Life is sacred, though eternal life is far more precious than physical life. The grace of God ensures that every human being has the opportunity to believe in Christ as their Savior, and thus receive eternal life. A criminal who believes in Christ before they are executed for murder will have far more happiness in the presence of the Lord than they would serving a life-time sentence in prison.

A person’s sympathy must be with the victim and his family, not with the criminal. The Word of God is very clear regarding murder. Murderers should be executed after a fair trial - ‘a life for a life’ (Ex. 21:23; Deut. 19:11-13, 21). This is how one honors (demonstrates respect for) the victim. Some evil person rapes and murders a woman. People with truth in their souls will honor her death through the execution of the heinous criminal. When people lack truth, they will lack the righteousness, justice, wisdom and courage to execute violent criminals.

**A Fortiori**

**A Fortiori** (a Latin phrase literally meaning “with stronger reason”) is a system of logic comparing two facts, where one can infer a stronger fact or conclusion based on that comparison. This stronger
fact or conclusion is so powerful that it cannot be denied - it is an inescapable conclusion. A simple example is as follows: if a man in sickness can lift 40 kilogram of potatoes (a reasoned conclusion) and he can, then (a fortiori - with stronger reason) he could in perfect health surely lift 20 kilogram of potatoes (inferred conclusion).” The inferred conclusion is stronger than the reasoned conclusion.

Many verses in the Bible use a fortiori logic, (the equivalent Greek phrase found in the New Testament is “πολλῷ μαλλὸν/pollo mallon”) enabling the Christian to develop total confidence in God and his plan. Philemon 16, Romans 5:9, 10, 15, 17; Matthew 6:30; and Romans 11:12 all use the pollo mallon phrase to express a fortiori logic, while in Romans 8:31-32 we see Paul express a fortiori logic but without using the words pollo mallon.

In Romans 5:8-10, Paul uses a fortiori logic to assure the believer of his eternal security. Even though nothing is difficult for God, from a logical standpoint the most difficult thing for God to do was in providing salvation for sinful mankind. In order to do so, the Father had to design a plan by which on one hand his integrity would not be violated, and on the other hand his righteousness would be satisfied. The Son would have to agree to become the God-Man to be qualified as a mediator; in His humanity He would be commissioned as a high priest in order to offer himself as a sacrifice, suffering unimaginable physical pain in order to provide the work of reconciliation and propitiation. In addition to all of this, His humanity would have to be provided with the greatest possible spiritual life with the power of God the Holy Spirit in order for Him to reach the cross in a state of perfect human righteousness and maintain that perfect righteousness while receiving the punishment for the sins of the world. This was not a simple matter. On the other hand, by logical comparison, providing eternal security is simple.

If God has done the most difficult thing for us, he will not withhold the less difficult. If God had done the most for his enemies (salvation for the unbeliever), then (with greater reason, logically) he must do the much less difficult (provide eternal security) for his beloved children.

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died as a substitute for us. By how much more [pollo mallon: with greater reason], therefore having now been justified [received imputed righteousness and declared righteous and qualified to go to heaven] by his blood [redemption, reconciliation and propitiation accomplished by means of Christ’s substitutionary spiritual death upon the cross] we will be delivered from the wrath of God through Him [through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross]. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by means of the death of His Son, by how much more [pollo mallon - with greater reason], having been reconciled, we shall be delivered by His life.” (Romans 5:8-10)

Logically, a person can accomplish much more through his life than through his death and will do much more for his beloved children than for his enemies. Therefore, if God did the most (in degree of effort) for his enemies through the death of Jesus Christ, it is only rational that God would be willing to do much more for his beloved children through the life of Jesus Christ.

Jesus uses a fortiori to teach his disciples [by application: all Church Age believers] that it is illogical to worry about the essentials of life:

“And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not work nor do they spin [to cloth themselves: God clothes them in grace], and I say to you that even Solomon in
all of his glory did not clothe himself like one of these [lilies]. Furthermore, if God keeps clothing the common grass of the field which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not with greater reason [pollo mallon] clothe [provide for] you? You, of little faith [in application of God’s Word]!

(Matthew 6:28-30)

Undeniable fact or inescapable conclusion: If God provides the lilies with the most beautiful of clothes (and he does), and even clothes the insignificant grasses of the meadows so that they can be nourished and handle the pressures of life, with greater reason will he not provide for his beloved children the necessities of life? If God can bless the lilies though they do not labor, and provide for the common grass of the field which has no relationship with him and being one of the least of plants which is here today and destroyed tomorrow, will he not with greater reason provide for his beloved children who will live with him forever? If God can and does provide for grass, which gets a lot of pressure (people walk all over it, dogs urinate on it, and the weather tears it up, dries it out, floods it), will God not provide for you?

The Conception of Mary and the Birth of Christ: Matthew 1:18-25

Matthew 1:18: “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: His mother, Mary had been contractually married to Joseph but before [emphatic form in the Greek] they had come together [in sexual intercourse], she was found to be pregnant [literally: “having in the womb”] from the source of the Holy Spirit.”

Mary was the mother of Christ’s biological life. As the mother, she provided the physical ovum which contained 23 chromosomes, while God the Holy Spirit provided 23 male chromosomes. When an ovum and a sperm are united, biological life is perpetuated. Thus, as Mary’s ovum came in contact with the other 23 chromosomes provided by the Spirit, so began the biological life of Jesus Christ.

Biological life is mortal. God created the first biological life from the dust (chemicals) of the soil. Biological life such as your muscles, bones, organs, nerves, etc. will upon death break down into the chemicals of the earth or atmosphere. Biological life came from chemicals and returns to chemicals (Eccl. 3:20).

Biological life precedes human life. In the garden God created first the biological life of Adam and then breathed into his nostrils a soul.* This union of biological and soul-life resulted in Adam’s human life (Gen. 2:7). After the fall, God delegated to mankind the responsibility to perpetuate the material, biological life which is formed in the womb. At birth God then creates the soul ex-nihilo and imputes it to biological life. As soon as the immortal soul-life unites with material biological life, human life begins.

(Footnote: God also created and imputed a human spirit to Adam simultaneously with the soul), however the trichotomous union of body, soul and spirit at the onset of human life is unique to just three people throughout history: Adam, Eve, and the Lord Jesus Christ).

Some people think that Mary was the mother of the deity of Christ, as if she were the creator of God. This is blasphemous and absurd for God is eternal and has no mother. Mary on the other hand was
a descendant of Adam and thus was born a human being. The Lord Jesus Christ created Adam and his wife, and so Mary is the result of the Lord’s creation, not vice versa!

**Jewish Marriage:**

Jewish marriage took place in three stages; namely, the contract, the ceremony, and the celebration. In the first stage, the marriage contract was signed by the parents of the groom and bride. After the contract had been signed and registered with the Jewish government, the couple was legally married, even though the ceremony and celebration may not take place for many months or even years. In the second stage of marriage, the ceremony, the groom and his male friends would ride their chariots to the home of the bride’s parents (or some other designated place), and then the groom only would enter the home while his friends waited outside. At that point, there would be four people in the home for this ceremony namely the bride, her parents and the groom. Something similar to the following scenario would take place: the bride would be positioned a couple of paces ahead of her parents. When the groom entered the room, the father would step forward beside his daughter and make the following announcement to her as he pointed to the young man, “This is your husband and has been your husband since the date of the contract.” Next he would say to the groom, “This is your wife.” Then, the father, taking the bride by the arm, walked forward and presented her to the groom. The groom then looked at the bride, but said nothing, then looked at the father and said, “She is now my wife, and I am her husband now and forever more.” (It is interesting to note that only the father and the groom spoke during the wedding ceremony.) The groom then took the bride’s fingers and put them into the crook of his arm and they walked out together. He put her in his chariot and his friends followed in a procession through town. He would then go either to a home which he had prepared or to his parent’s home. Waiting outside the home would be the bride’s friends, the bridesmaids who would be holding lanterns and waiting for the returning groom, bride and groomsmen (compare with the marriage feast at the 2nd Advent: Matt. 25:1-13). The groom and bride would enter the home first followed by the groomsmen and lastly the bridesmaids. Then, there would be a wedding dinner and celebration which would last from several days to several weeks. At some point during the celebration, the couple would slip away and begin their honeymoon and consummate the marriage. (Please listen to Spiritual Dynamic Series 631 by R.B. Thieme Jr. regarding this subject.)

**The Virgin Conception of Mary and Joseph’s reaction:**

In this passage, Mary becomes pregnant apart from Joseph after being legally married to him via the contract signed by his and her parents. This was why Joseph was so concerned when he had discovered that she was pregnant. Since he knew that he did not bring about her pregnancy, he initially assumed that she had committed adultery. After he was informed in a dream by an angel of the Lord regarding the truth of this matter, he went ahead with the ceremonial phase of the marriage (Matthew 1:20).

1:19. “Joseph, her husband, being virtuous [experientially righteous] did not desire to make a public display of her. He desired secretly to divorce her.”

Joseph was not only moral, but also possessed the virtue acquired from the spiritual life. Morality was designed for the security, stability, protection and blessing of a group of people in a national entity and as such requires only human power and determination for execution. Virtue, on the other hand, relates to the inward function of the soul and comprises attributes such as grace-orientation,
love for God the Father, unconditional love directed toward members of the human race and occupation with Christ.

Morality without virtue can very easily be corrupted (distorted) by arrogance resulting in a moral, but weak person. Morality combined with arrogance produces great self-righteousness. A self-righteous individual assumes that his morality equals perfection. From his imagined perch of perfection he evaluates, criticizes, judges, and maligns others. However, he is far from perfection. He understands neither God nor God’s plan; he understands neither himself nor the people whom he judges and maligns.

Believers and to some extent unbelievers can avoid this “moral degeneracy” related to the distortion of morality. With authority orientation and humility, moral unbelievers who possess some appreciation of grace can avoid much of the stench of self-righteousness. The believer on the other hand can go much further, for through the execution of the spiritual life he is able to remove self-righteousness and develop great virtue.

Joseph possessed and demonstrated this virtue obtained from the spiritual life. He didn’t get angry at Mary when he first discovered she was pregnant. He didn’t malign her. He didn’t call her “a dirty and faithless adulteress” as other men facing a similar situation would have. He didn’t feel sorry for himself and say, “How could she do this to me?” He didn’t become bitter and demand that she be stoned to death under the requirements of the Mosaic Law, which stated that adultery was not only a sin, but also a crime:

“If there is a virgin, betrothed [contractually married] to a man, and another man finds her in the city and lies with her, then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city and you shall stone them to death. The girl because she did not cry out in the city [she consented], and the man because he has violated his neighbor’s wife. Thus, you shall purge the evil [adultery is more than a sin] from among you.” (Deuteronomy 22:23, 24)

Because Joseph was a man of great humility, he did not feel any personal disgrace in this matter. On the contrary, he was only concerned about Mary’s feelings and security. He wanted to protect her from disgrace and personal harm. Therefore, he decided not to bring her before the Jewish court system, but to divorce her secretly. In a state of great humility and objectivity, he was able to apply grace toward his wife and so was able to avoid any subjective reaction.

God always treats us in grace, so we should treat others in grace as well. You may say, “My friends do not deserve to be forgiven.” Did we deserve salvation? Did we deserve to be forgiven of our pre-salvation-sins by God the Father (Isaiah 44:22; Ephesians 4:32), or our post-salvation sins whenever we rebound (1 John 1:9)? Do we deserve this spiritual life given to all church age believers? First Corinthians 4:7 states, “What do you have that you did not receive?”

1:20. “While he was thinking about these things [i.e. divorcing Mary and canceling the ceremony], behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take alongside [in the marriage ceremony] Mary, your wife, for what has been conceived in her is from the source of the Holy Spirit.’”

Once Joseph had the necessary information, he was able to make a rational decision. From this situation, we can learn the following principles: no one can make a correct decision if he does not have sufficient information, and secondly, no one can make a rational decision unless he removes emotion from the decision making process. This concept can also be explained by the following simple equation:

\[ \text{Sufficient facts} - \text{emotion} = \text{rational decision making} \]
In the context of the discussion of Joseph’s character we should go one step further, adding virtue to this formula.

Sufficient facts - emotion + virtue = virtuous and correct decision making

The sin nature is passed down to the offspring through the male sperm. (See: Fellowship with God, Volume 2; Essay: The Perfection of Christ by Max Klein) So, if Joseph had participated in the pregnancy of Mary, Jesus would have been born with a sin nature.

Because of this [an inference from what proceeded], just as through one man [Adam], the sin nature entered into the world, and through the sin nature [came] [spiritual] death [because God imputed Adam’s Original Sin to the sin nature] so [spiritual] death spread to the entire human race because all sinned [when Adam sinned]. (Romans 5:12)

The Greek word “ἁμαρτία / hamartia” in the singular usually should be translated “sin nature.” On the other hand, when this word is found in the plural, it should be translated “sins.” This should help explain the translation above as well as numerous other verses in Scripture.

The Unique Birth of the God-Man:

God is fair to mankind at birth and gracious in solving the problems connected with man’s entrance into this world. When the fetus, which possesses the sin nature, emerges from the womb, God does two things simultaneously.

1. He creates a soul and unites it with biological life which results in human life.
2. He imputes Adam’s original sin of disobedience to the genetically inherent sin nature which results in spiritual death (Romans 5:12).

Because of these imputations, human life and spiritual death occur simultaneously.

God is fair in imputing Adam’s original sin to the sin nature since they are related that is Adam’s sin caused the sin nature. God not only was perfectly just in this act, but wise in making all mankind sinners at birth, and gracious in providing a solution through the cross.

Jesus not only had to be born perfect, but He also had to be genetically related to King David, in order to assume the title “Son of David” (Isaiah. 9:7; Luke 1:32; Matthew. 21:9). However, as we have already discussed, the sin nature comes down in copulation through the father. So, He could not have a genetic father for if He had had a genetic father, he would have been born as we were born, with a sin nature and the imputation of Adam’s original sin. This would have automatically disqualified Him from being our savior. On the other hand, He had to have a genetic mother since the Messiah had to come from the line of David. Since Mary was descended from David and Bathsheba through their youngest son, Nathan, she was qualified to be that mother.

When Jesus was born, God created a soul for him and placed it in his biological life resulting in human life. At the same time, the Son of God (the deity of Jesus Christ, possessing all the characteristics of God as the second person of the Trinity) united with the Son of David, the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ. This resulted in one person possessing two natures: the God-Man. His status as the unique God-Man meant that the Lord Jesus Christ became the mediator between righteous God and fallen man, qualified to provide the work of reconciliation for all mankind on the cross (1 Tim. 2:5; Rom. 5:11).

The Biblical Viewpoint of Life:
Some translations of this passage state that Mary was pregnant “with child.” Matthew 1:18-25 contains no expression such as “pregnant with child.” Certain translators who do not believe that there is just biological life, but also soul life in the womb, added the phrase “pregnant with child” to the translation. The Greek text uses two phrases for pregnancy in this passage; one is found in verse eighteen and the other in this verse. In verse eighteen it states that Mary was discovered “εν γαστρι εχουσα” which literally translates into English as “she was having in the womb.” (This is the same phrase found in verse 23, except that the present participle form of the verb is used in place of the future tense recorded in verse 18). There is no object mentioned at all. Since the Jews understood that there was no human life in the womb, they just described pregnancy as “having in the womb [a possession in the womb].” In verse 20, Matthew describes pregnancy as “that [substance/zygote] which was conceived in her.” The Greek expression “that which was conceived” is a neuter participle with a neuter article. In other words, this Greek expression designates the fetus as neuter. The usage of the neuter would play down the importance of the fetus and would imply that the fetus has no human life since human life has to be either male or female. Also, in this passage in describing conception and the fetus, the word “child” is never used and for a good reason. There is no human life in the womb.

1:21. “She will give birth to a son and you [Joseph] will call His name Jesus for He will save [Jesus is a transliteration of the Hebrew name “Joshua /Yehoshua” meaning “The Lord is (our) salvation”] His people [the Jews] from their sins [The Cross: since this passage is discussing the Jews, it excludes the gentiles].”

Notice the order here: first, birth; second, becoming a son; and third, giving a name. The Scripture never calls the fetus a child, a son or a daughter. Furthermore, in Scripture naming always comes after birth for the simple reason that a fetus is not a human being. King Solomon writing under the ministry of the Holy Spirit states in Ecclesiastes 3:2a, “A time to be born, and a time to die,” thus defining the boundaries of human life. At birth the soul is imputed to biological life; at death the soul departs from biological life. The Lord also emphasizes birth as the start of human life, “Jesus answered and said to him, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God” (John 3:3). In John 3:5, Jesus goes on to say, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born out from water and out from the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.”

In order to spend eternity with God one must undergo two births. If a mother aborts a two month old fetus, there is no birth and if no birth, no soul; if no soul, no human life; if no human life, no entrance into the Kingdom of God. The first birth occurs at physical birth when the placenta breaks and amniotic fluid flows out from a broken membrane (“born of water”) and the second birth occurs at salvation when one receives a human spirit from the Holy Spirit (“born of the Spirit”), and the Father then imputes eternal life to that newly created human spirit. If human life really did occur in the womb, Christ would have created the following metaphor, “one has to be conceived again,” but he didn’t.

Identifying the Messiah:

1:22-23. “Now this whole matter occurred in order that what was communicated by the Lord through the prophet [Isaiah] might be fulfilled saying, ‘Behold, the virgin will be pregnant’ [literally: ‘will have in the womb’] and she shall give birth to a son and they [Jewish believers] shall call his name “Immanuel” which is translated “God with us.””

The Jews were given many ways of identifying the Messiah. Two ways pertinent to this passage are as follows: He would be in the royal line of David, and He would come into this world by means of a
virgin pregnancy and birth. Although David and Bathsheba had four sons, only two lines are pertinent. Joseph was in the line of Solomon, and Mary was in the line of Nathan. Thus, their marriage brought the two existing royal lines of David together. The Jews should have realized that this royal marriage could easily have been the marriage in which the humanity of Christ would be born.

Isaiah prophesied that a virgin pregnancy would be a sign:

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you all [the Jewish people] a miraculous sign: Behold, a virgin will be pregnant and will bear a son, and she [Mary will recognize that Jesus is the God-Man based on what Gabriel had told her in Luke 1:35, and so she will be the first to use this title] will call His person Immanuel [a title]. (Isaiah 7:14)

The primary meaning of the Hebrew word "עֵלָמי / alma" is “virgin”; its secondary meaning is “young woman.” In this passage it is obvious that the author intended to use the primary meaning of this word, since it is not a miracle for a young woman to become pregnant. Furthermore, when Matthew translated this verse into the Greek, he used the Greek word “παρθενος / parthenos” which can only mean virgin.

Regarding the word Immanuel, ‘Im’ means ‘with’, ‘ma’ has no meaning, ‘nu’ means ‘us’ and ‘el’ means ‘God.’ In the age of Israel the deity of Christ dwelt between the cherubim in the Holy of Holies until the time when the Ark was destroyed (Exodus 25:21-22). In the Church Age, Jesus Christ dwells in the body of every believer (Colossians 1:27). However, during Christ’s thirty-three years on the earth, he dwelt among the people, “And the Word [a title for the Son of God] became flesh and dwelt [tabernacle] among us” (John 1:14).

1:24. “Joseph having awoken from the dream did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and he took alongside his wife [the marriage ceremony in the home of his wife].”

Before the canon of Scripture was complete, God communicated his word through many unusual methods. In the Old Testament, The Son of God often communicated His message by appearing in different ways, which we call theophanies. ‘Theo’ means ‘God’; ‘phan’ means ‘appearance’. As a theophany, God the Son appeared as a man (Gen.18:1-33); as a phenomena of nature (Ex. 3:2); and as the “Angel of Jehovah” (Gen. 16:7-13; Num. 22:22-35). Before the Bible was written God also communicated through angels (Gen. 19:1-22; Luk. 1:13-20; Acts 7:53); dreams (Gen. 37:5-10); visions (Dan. 2:19; Acts 16:9, 10), and trances (Acts 11:5-10). These methods were unusual but necessary because unlike now there was no completed canon of scripture.

Conclusion:

On the appointed day of the wedding ceremony, Joseph went to the home of Mary’s parents and participated in the wedding ceremony. It is not likely that there was a celebration since Mary was showing pregnancy and Mary walking around at a party in this condition would have been poor taste and poor social etiquette.

1:25. “But, he did not know her [did not consummate the marriage] until after she had given birth to a son and then he [Joseph] called his name Jesus [Savior].”

Mary was a virgin when she conceived and remained so until after the birth of Jesus. God does everything in an orderly way. Because the uncontaminated biological life prepared for the humanity of
Jesus was so important, and because it had to be crystal clear that Mary’s pregnancy did not involve Joseph, he would have to wait until after the birth of Jesus to express his love to Mary.

In conclusion of this passage, we should note that both the conception of Mary and the birth of Christ were unique, in order for God to provide for our salvation.

**Human and Divine Love:**

**What is True Human Love?**

True love is not lust, feeling or attraction. A man motivated by sexual lust commits fornication or adultery. From the so-called “romance movies” coming out of Hollywood these days, one would assume that romance naturally begins with sexual sins. To the contrary, unrighteousness and sin cannot be components of true love. Now, let me tell a little story to illustrate how feelings cannot be the basis for true love:

“A certain young man and woman happen to meet each other for the first time as they begin a hike along a trail through beautiful forest. He smiles at her nicely and she responds with a friendly hello, and so they decide to walk along the trail together. As they walk along there is a little chit-chat about previous walks they have done in the area, but mostly they are marveling at the beautiful scenery, and so their feelings dominate their mentality. That evening, they dine with candlelight seated aside a window from which they are able to view a beautiful lighted gorge. She, being overwhelmed by all the feelings of the day states, “This has been the most wonderful day of my life.” Later that night as the last waltz finishes, the man also carried away by his feelings and the animation of the young lady, puts her hand into his and utters those magical words, “I love you” and proposes. She responds ecstatically, “Yes, Yes!”

Can a whirlwind romance such as this really lead to a happy marriage? Since feelings and emotions come and go, can this be true love? What do they know about each other? How much humility and virtue do they possess? Is she willing to accept his authority and leadership? Is the man a virtuous, responsible and wise individual? Though feelings and emotions may be responders to true love, they in themselves do not constitute true love.

To give another example, let’s say a young man sees the most beautiful woman his eyes have ever beheld. Her eyes sparkle with radiance; her facial structure is fascinating; her gleaming white teeth are aligned perfectly; her smile inviting. Her body’s symmetry is stunning, her upper torso pulchritudinous. Everything about her beauty is par excellence. She returns his stare and wonders if this man is descended from the Trojan prince, Paris. He is tall and brawny with reddish curly hair; his smile is confident and relaxed. She wonders, “Is this not the most handsome creature I have ever seen?” And so, as the world stops around them and their hearts flutter wildly they fall in love (allegedly). Can true love be obtained in an instant? Can true love be based on the physical appearance of one’s body? Rather, I maintain that true human love is in the soul and has four major components, namely: knowledge, righteousness, justice and grace. These four characteristics would imply truth circulating in the soul.
Knowledge: For the unbeliever (as well as the believer), there must be the understanding and acceptance of the Laws of Divine Establishment, which outline principles such as abstinence of sexual relations before marriage, fidelity, the husband’s responsibility to take care of the wife, and the wife’s agreement to put herself under the authority of the husband. In addition to these concepts, there must be knowledge of the one a person alleges to love. (One cannot love someone if he does not know that person.)

Righteousness: There must be a virtuous righteousness in the soul which is expressed in thinking, motivation, decisions and actions, a righteousness that is never in conflict with grace. (Self-righteousness based on legalism is condemning and critical and has no part in true love. You know the type an unbeliever who is vainly proud of his morality or the Christian who is always bragging about all the deeds he is doing allegedly for the Lord.)

Justice: Both partners must understand justice (fairness) and even the proper function of jurisprudence and how it is applied to circumstances and people.

Grace: There must be the understanding and the application of grace. If not, true love does not and cannot exist. However, the unbeliever’s capacity to forgive is limited, in contrast to the believer with maximum doctrine who has unlimited capacity to forgive.

Regarding the need for grace orientation, let me tell you a little story. When I was living in Korea, a middle aged Korean lady told me a sad story about her marriage-life. When she was a young woman, she and a young man fell deeply in love and so they got married. Unfortunately the love ended half way through their honeymoon and never again was she loved by him. Obviously, this man saw some flaw or sin in his wife or some possible failure which offended his subjective standards of right and wrong. Not being able to forgive her (he had no grace application), his superficial love ceased and what could have been a happy and vibrant marriage turned into a miserable one for both of them.

In summary, true human love must have four major components which come from learning and understanding truth as delineated in the Scripture. If these components exist in a human, he has capacity for love. If not, he doesn’t.

What is divine love?

Some would say that divine love is one of ten attributes, the remaining nine being righteousness, justice, eternal life, sovereignty, immutability, veracity, omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence. Then, there is grace which is another attribute or simply the policy of God. If these are all separate and distinct, then what is love? Since theologians have not properly defined God’s love, most Christians assume that the love of God is somehow related to emotion. However, this is impossible since God has no emotion! (Emotions vary and so are inconsistent with God’s immutability. Maybe you recall from previous studies that the use of emotions attributed to God in scripture is called ‘anthropopathism’ and is for the purpose of revealing God’s character and policy in terms that a student of the Bible can relate to.) So, love cannot be just one of the ten individual and separate attributes.

If that should be the case, then what is divine love? God’s love both impersonal (directed toward the unrighteous unbeliever) and personal (directed toward the believer having received imputed
God's impersonal love with its four components is revealed in John 3:16 which states,

"God [the Father] loved [impersonal love directed toward the unbeliever] the world so much [He had knowledge of all the sins of human history. Having this knowledge, His righteousness demanded that every sin be punished and so his justice executed this required judgment] with the result that he gave his uniquely born son with the result that anyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life [salvation offered as a grace gift]."

When a person responds to the promise found in John 3:16 and believes in Jesus Christ he becomes the object of God's personal love because this person now possess God's perfect righteousness.

“Even the righteousness of God [imputed righteousness] through faith in Jesus Christ ...” (Romans 3:22a)

“He [God] loves [His own, perfect] righteousness [which righteousness is imputed to the believer at salvation]...” (Psalm 33:5a)

Let's illustrate how the four components of God's love functions toward the believer, using divine discipline as our example:

“For whom the Lord loves [omniscience (knowledge), righteousness, justice and grace are all involved], he punishes [warning discipline] and scourges [intensive discipline] every son whom he receives.” (Heb. 12:6)

The omniscience of the Lord knows just when to administer corrective discipline to the believer. He knows when to administer warning discipline and when to administer intensive discipline. Then the righteousness of God makes a demand against the failing believer. It demands punishment and what the righteousness of God demands, the justice of God executes. The righteousness of God's love must be satisfied before God's grace policy can be initiated. When the Christian out of fellowship names his sins to the Father, he is forgiven and restored to fellowship through the grace-recovery procedure of 1 John 1:9. After being restored to fellowship the believer is then able to advance in the spiritual life which is provided in grace. I hope that the information presented and these illustrations helped to explain how the components of God's love harmonize into the beautiful composition of love.

See R. B. Thieme Jr's Spiritual Dynamic Series 1730-1778 regarding divine love as a composition.

Other books by Max Klein:

* Fellowship with God, Volume One*
* Fellowship with God, Volume Two*
* James, A commentary*
* Philemon, A commentary*
* Child Abuse: Causes, Effects and Consequences*