

The culture of
LOVE

NATIONAL YOUTH SEMINAR
MARCH 2023

THE CULTURE OF LOVE

National Youth Seminar – March 2023

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March 2023

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Article I

Friendship love

Luke Pomery

We give thanks to the Lord for His word to us over the past couple of years, and for the subsequent cultural reformation that has taken place in our congregations, in our families and in our personal lives. A major element of this cultural reformation has been our progressive deliverance from sacramentalism and our progressive restoration to the fellowship of the *agape* meal.

Agape, or *offering love*, is the culture of the kingdom of God. As we shall consider in this article, an outcome of being progressively restored to the culture of *agape* fellowship is the growing expression of *friendship love* towards one another. *Friendship love* is a vital element of all our relationships; and, depending on the relational context, it will have many distinct expressions and applications. Learning the culture of friendship love in these contexts is a key lesson for us in this season. In order to do this, we will need to *let go* of our previous concepts of 'friendship', which have been formed from our own experiences.

What is true *friendship love*? First, a 'friend' is someone who *meets and knows God*. You cannot be a friend to others unless you know, and are

known by, God. Second, a 'friend' meets and knows *others*. If a person says that they have fellowship with God, but hates their brother, they are in darkness; they lie and do not practise the truth. 1Jn 1:6. 1Jn 2:9. Furthermore, a friend is obedient to Christ's word; a friend lays down their life for the other; a friend is a faithful messenger; and a friend shows affection to those who are their brethren. Importantly, a friend will also express the affection of friendship love towards the members of their own *family*.

The church of brotherly love

The presbytery and church of Philadelphia had overcome the issues facing *all seven* lampstand churches whom Jesus addressed, as recorded in the book of Revelation. Rev 2-3. We note the words of Christ to Philadelphia, 'I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no-one can shut it; for you have *a little strength*, have *kept My word*, and have *not denied My name*.' Rev 3:8. Christ's three-fold commendation - a little strength, keeping the word of His perseverance, and not denying His name - reveals the pathway of overcoming for every lampstand church.

Notably, within their journey of restoration, the lampstand church of Philadelphia had overcome the specific matters for which Christ had rebuked the lampstand church of *Ephesus*. Christ said to those in Ephesus, 'I have this against you, that you have left your first love.' Rev 2:4. The Greek word for 'love' in this verse is *agape*. Another way of describing *agape* love is '*offering love*'.

Jesus explained that *agape* is *offering love* when He said, 'Greater love [*agape*] has no-one than this, than to *lay down one's life* for his friends [*phileo*].' Joh 15:13. We note that the Greek word used for 'friends' in this verse is *phileo*. *Phileo* is *another* type of love which is also mentioned in the Scriptures. *Phileo* love can be understood as '*friendship love*'.

One expression of *friendship love* is the love of our brethren. *Friendship love of the brethren* is a specific quality of the divine nature, which is multiplied to us. The apostle Peter wrote, 'Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness *brotherly kindness* [i.e., friendship love of the brethren], and to brotherly kindness *love* [i.e. offering love].' 2Pe 1:5-7. We note here that *friendship love of the brethren* is listed directly alongside *offering love*. Through repentance and faith, the Philadelphian lampstand church had received

both of these capacities from Christ - *offering love* and *friendship love*. As such, they were called 'the church of brotherly love'. This is the literal meaning of the name Philadelphia.

Corrupted friendship love

A key point to note is that 'offering love' is the *foundation* for 'friendship love' in all of its expressions. To say it another way, you cannot be a godly friend without having received *offering love* from God. In their interaction at the Sea of Tiberias, Jesus asked Peter twice if he loved Him with *offering love*. Peter replied twice that he loved Jesus with *friendship love*. Joh 21:15-16. He claimed to love Jesus as a friend, but was without the capacity to lay down his life for Him. The third time, Jesus asked Peter if he was really able to love Him with *friendship love*. Joh 21:17. At this point, Peter was grieved, realising that it was not possible to be a true friend without living by offering. In fact, claiming to be Jesus' friend *without offering love* caused Peter to *deny* Jesus in the court of Caiaphas during the inquisition and abuse of the Jewish leaders upon Jesus.

When a person claims to be someone's friend, without laying down their life for them, this person is not demonstrating godly friendship. Rather, they are showing *worldly* friendship. Worldly friendships become increasingly governed by the *wisdom of man*, driven by *emotions*, and empowered by *unclean spirits*. This is the progressive framework by which James described the wisdom from beneath: it is 'earthly', then 'sensual' and then 'demonic'. Jas 3:15. It is startling to realise that there is a demonic form of friendship! As an example, Judas, the disciple of Jesus who was possessed by Satan, betrayed Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane with the eager kiss of friendship affection. Luk 22:48. Mat 26:49. Clearly, this expression of friendship affection was not established in the *offering love* of God.

There are many expressions of worldly friendship that are driven by envy and self-seeking. Some examples include friendships that are centred around the love of pleasure, or hedonism; the love of pre-eminence; the love of contention; the love of money; the love of self; 'benevolence' to mankind; befriending others for personal gain; the love of philosophy; and pretending to be a brother, yet not meeting another's need. 2Ti 3:2-4. 3Jn 1:9. 1Co 11:16. 1Ti 6:10. Act 28:2. Jas 4:4. Col 2:8. Gal 2:4. Hence, Solomon wrote, 'The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray.' Pro 12:26. Clearly, not all expressions of friendship are founded upon offering.

Sanctified friendship love

The apostle Peter indicated that the *offering love* and *friendship love* of God are both evidence of the new birth, writing, ‘Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere [*friendship*] *love* of the brethren, *love* [*by offering*] one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.’ 1Pe 1:22-23. We continue to receive these aspects of the love of God through the word of God and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Rom 5:5. As the apostle Paul stated, ‘Concerning *brotherly love* you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are *taught by God to love* [*by offering*] *one another*.’ 1Th 4:9.

What does godly friendship ‘look like’? It is described in the Scriptures as being without covetousness; having affection for one another; showing a kiss of friendship; aspiring to be honourable; and loving and practising what is good. Heb 13:5. Joh 11:3. 1Th 5:26. 1Th 4:11. Tit 1:8. The apostle Peter also described the virtues of friendship when he wrote, ‘Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous.’ 1Pe 3:8. All these *virtues* of godly friendship are founded upon offering love!

Furthermore, this friendship love is expressed in a variety of specific relational contexts. Such relationships include being a friend of God, a friend of Christ, a friend of the brethren, a friend to your family, a friend to your spouse, a friend to your children and being a friend to guests or strangers (i.e. being ‘hospitable’). Jas 2:23. Joh 15:14. Heb 13:1. Rom 12:10. Tit 2:4. 1Pe 4:9. We shall consider some of these specific expressions of friendship in further detail.

We are Jesus’ friend because we believe what He says and are obedient to His commands. Jesus said, ‘You are *My friends* if you do whatever I command you.’ Joh 15:14. We recall that Abraham was counted as ‘a friend of God’ forever because he received the free gift of righteousness through faith. Jas 2:23. 2Ch 20:7. He believed God’s word and was obedient to participate in the offering of Yahweh.

Jesus is also *our friend*! He said to the presbytery and church of Laodicea, ‘As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.’ Rev 3:19. Amazingly, the word for ‘love’ in this Scripture is ‘*friendship love*’! His chastening comes to those whom He loves *as His friends*. As our friend, Jesus speaks to us the word of the Father. Joh 15:15.

Friendship in the family

One important expression of friendship love is towards our own family members. The apostle Paul stated, 'Let [*offering*] love be without hypocrisy... be kindly *affectionate* [*lit. 'a friend to your family'*] with *brotherly love* [*lit. 'a love of the brethren'*], in honour giving preference to one another.' Rom 12:9-10. Explaining the sentiment which Paul was conveying, we could say it this way: 'By the *offering love* of God, show tender affection and *friendship love* to each person in your own family, because they are *also* your brethren! For this reason, *esteem* the life of Christ which is in them. And be mindful to also *receive* each person's initiative to express honour towards their family.'

We could ask the questions: 'Why is there a famine of fellowship and *friendship love* within our nuclear and extended families while, at the same time, the Lord is restoring to us the joy of the *agape* meal, as a Christian community? What is hindering our expression of *offering love* and *friendship love* towards our own kin?'

Commonly, there is a *false* and presumptuous notion of 'friendship' that takes place within family settings. Family members might suppose that their family 'should listen' to their complaints about other people or about the pressured situations they have encountered throughout the day. Psa 106:25. Furthermore, they might *expect* their family to automatically support the projection, or 'image', by which they themselves want to be accepted by others. Such an expression is distinctly lacking in honour and discernment. In such settings, the family unit can become factional, and bound by obligation.

Evidently, *family obligation* is a key reason why we are hindered in friendship love within our families. In these situations, the familiar obligation to maintain 'the family image' causes our mouths to be closed on certain issues. Evidence of spiritual oppression due to this obligation includes the *unwillingness* or *inability* to raise a matter for discussion. The 'currency' with which we 'trade', while under this obligation, is *acceptance*. That is, we refrain from open discussion about our family life because we want to maintain our acceptance within our family relationships. The trading dynamics of family obligation preclude the expression of true friendship love within the family through offering. Moreover, when a family is bound by obligation, fellowship with the brethren is despised, and matters of uncleanness or crisis are concealed within the family.

A faithful friend is a messenger

What is true friendship in the family? A faithful friend is a *messenger*. Solomon taught, 'Open rebuke is better than [friendship] love carefully concealed. Faithful are the *wounds of a friend*, but the *kisses of an enemy* are deceitful.' Pro 27:5-6. How are we to speak within the family? It is according to the wounding effect of the word of the cross that separates every individual within the family to their own obedient response to the word of their name as a son of God. As a family, we are friends to one another if we hold fast to the word of each one's predestination.

It is helpful to keep in mind that *a true messenger* - whilst being a faithful friend to others - is often *without* many friends, themselves. And this is particularly so within their own family setting. Let's consider Joseph as an example. We read, 'When [Joseph's] brothers saw that their father loved him [as a friend] more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him.' Gen 37:4. When Joseph spoke the word of God to his brothers and parents, which the Lord had revealed to him in a dream, his brothers hated him even more! Gen 37:5. His brothers, provoked by his communication as a messenger to them, responded by throwing him into a deep pit!

We note Jesus' words, 'A *prophet* is not without honour *except* in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.' Mar 6:4. Now, when we take into consideration that the apostle Paul desired that every one of *us* should learn how to *prophesy*, this puts each of us, likewise, in 'a spot of bother'! 1Co 14:31. The same was true for Jesus. Those from Jesus' hometown of Nazareth were offended by His message to them because of their history and perceived familiarity with Him. Mat 13:54-57. They were so incensed at *Him* being a messenger to them that they tried to throw Him from a cliff! Luk 4:28-29.

Prior to their own conversion, Jesus' own mother and brothers were unable to receive Him as a messenger and friend to them. The Scriptures explain that His own brothers did not even believe that He was the Son of God. Joh 7:5. On one occasion, Jesus' mother and brothers were so convinced that He was 'out of His mind' that they had come to lay hold of Him. Mar 3:21. To this, Jesus replied, 'Who is My mother, or My brothers?' Mar 3:33. Jesus then redefined friendship within the family by saying, 'For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.' Mar 3:35. Wonderfully, we know that Jesus' mother and brothers *later* came to be His true brethren and friends. Act 1:14. Likewise, for us, every family relationship is redefined through a true expression of friendship love.

Article 2

Receiving a love of the truth

Lachlan Perrin

The lie of Satan is weakening the nations

At this time, the light of the word is exposing the schemes of Satan. 2Co 2:11. He is the ruler of the seventh world kingdom. Rev 12:3. The apostle John summarised Satan's dominion, when he wrote, 'The whole world lies in the *power* of the evil one'. 1Jn 5:19. Helpfully, Jesus has revealed the nature of Satan's 'power', declaring, 'Satan was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.' Joh 8:44. Satan exercises power over the nations by proliferating the lie that mankind can be 'like God'. This is the fallen belief that a person can be their own source, designer, and controller of life. When a person believes this lie, and seeks to actualise it through self-sourced ideas, they rebel against God. This leads to eternal death. We can see how Satan's deception murders the sons of men.

Satan's deception is a sweeping darkness across the face of the earth that is pressuring mankind to become some kind of genderless, angel-type identity. This is causing an epidemic of individualism, accompanied by a fiercely guarded belief that every person has the right to define their own

identity, gender, sexual orientation, purpose in life, and so on. Satan's sorcery is corrupting and confusing mankind! 2Co 11:3. Things that were once simple and binary, such as 'moral or immoral' or 'boy or girl', are now spectrums. And everyone defines their own spectrums! 'Truth', which *is* absolute, has become relative. 'Truth' is what is 'true for me'. But 'truth' is also what is 'true for you'. The impact of this darkness upon modern society can be seen in the mounting failures of morality, the integrity of the family unit, national values, mental stability, and so on.

The apostle Paul described the outworking of Satan's lie upon mankind in his letter to the church in Rome. He wrote, 'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness'. Rom 1:18. The evidence of Satan's deception in the world is the groundswell of initiative to suppress the very notion of 'truth'. 'For even though they knew God, they did not honour Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened... Therefore, God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonoured among them. For *they exchanged the truth of God for a lie*, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.' Rom 1:21,24-25. Satan's deception is turning the hearts of men to the weak and beggarly elemental principles of life that belong under the angels. Gal 4:8-9.

The growing influence of Satan in the world highlights a remarkable juxtaposition. On one hand, mankind is being emboldened to define 'truth' according to individual perspective. On the other hand, the integrity of society is progressively sinking in an ocean of eight billion incompatible versions of 'truth'. The prophet Isaiah described this effect of Satan's deception, when he wrote, 'How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, *you who have weakened the nations!*' Isa 14:12.

Concerning this 'weakening', the prophet Daniel foretold that the seventh world kingdom would burgeon, while, at the same time, increase in fragility. He wrote, 'In that you saw the feet and toes [representative of the seventh world kingdom], partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, *it will be a divided kingdom ... they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another*, even as iron does not combine with pottery.' Dan 2:41,43. The key point is, as the expanse of Satan's influence grows, his kingdom progressively weakens. Jesus made precisely this point when He taught about exercising Satanic spirits.

He said, '*Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand.*' Mat 12:25.

Speaking about the coming of Antichrist, the apostle Paul wrote, 'The one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, *because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved*'. 2Th 2:9-10. Jesus also spoke about the outcome of Satan's influence in the end of the age, saying, 'Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love [*agape*] will grow cold.' Mat 24:12. We give thanks to the Lord for His initiative to restore us to the true culture of *agape* fellowship. Clearly, only those who receive an *agape* love of the truth will withstand Satan's deception and be saved.

'What is truth?'

Following Jesus' arrest, He was led to the Praetorium and questioned by Pilate, the governing Roman official in Judea. Upon asking Jesus if He was the King of the Jews, Jesus answered, 'You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this *I have come into the world, to testify to the truth*. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.' Joh 18:37. It is important to note that Jesus did not say that He came to define what truth is. Rather, He came to *testify* to the truth.

Earlier in the evening, prior to His arrest, Jesus prayed to the Father concerning His disciples, 'Sanctify them in the truth; *Your word is truth*.' Joh 17:17. 'Truth' is the word of the Father; the definition and detail of every person's sonship. The Father is the source of all sonship, and *His word is the beginning and end of all truth*. His word defines the height, depth, length and breadth of your sonship. Outside of this, there is no alternative truth about you. The psalmist declared, '*The sum of Your word is truth*, and every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.' Psa 119:160.

In the next verse of John's account we read, 'Pilate said to Jesus, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in Him".' Joh 18:38. From this remarkable statement, we learn that the capacity to draw a conclusion about a matter does not equal the discovery of truth. Pilate concluded that Jesus was not guilty. Nevertheless, he confessed that he did not know what the 'truth' was! His question, 'What is truth?', revealed that his determination of a judgement was altogether different from the 'truth' that Jesus came to testify about.

We see that truth does not originate within us. In fact, to presume that we can define 'truth' from our own resources is the very definition of 'the working of Satan'. Joh 8:44. Mulling over a matter, weighing up the pros and cons, and then making a self-justified decision without engaging fellowship, is the presumptuous mindset that Satan has fathered within fallen mankind. In contrast, those who receive a love of the truth understand that they are not the creator of truth. In James' letter, he wrote, 'In the exercise of *His will* [the Father's] *He brought us forth by the word of truth*, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures'. Jas 1:18. We can only learn and know the truth because it is proclaimed to us as the word of truth.

Receiving an 'agape' of the truth

Jesus explained how we learn the truth when He said, 'If you continue [abide] in My word, you are truly disciples of Mine; and *you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.*' Joh 8:31-32. The word of truth is proclaimed by Christ to lampstand churches, through the presbyteries in His right hand. We are to *abide* in this word. In Paul's first letter to Timothy, he described a lampstand church as the 'pillar and ground of the truth'. 1Ti 3:15. The key point is that, as we learn to abide and participate in the *agape* fellowship of a lampstand church, we avail ourselves of the only context where the truth of our sonship is spoken to us.

When Jesus declared, 'You will know the truth', He was referring to the illumination that the gospel of salvation ministers. In the light of this word, we behold our reality; that is, the truth of our name, the nature of our deception and fallenness, and the discrepancy between these two. At this point, the word is a lamp to our feet (exposing our reality) and a light to our path (defining our recovery). Psa 119:105. Those who have, *as a culture*, received a love of the truth, will do three things when Christ's word pierces their heart. They will believe the truth; they will obey the truth; and they will speak the truth. This is what it means to 'know the truth'. The *testimony* of this truth overcomes Satan, setting a disciple free from the bondage of his lies and deception.

It is important to note that *understanding truth is a spiritual capacity*. We have been raised and seated with Christ, far above the elemental spirits. As those who are spiritual, we can appraise life from beyond the construct and constraint of these principles. The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians saying, 'A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand

them, because they are spiritually appraised.' 1Co 2:14. The words of truth that Jesus speaks to us are Spirit and life. Joh 6:63. As we participate in *agape* fellowship, listening and receiving the word of present truth, the Holy Spirit pours the love of God into our heart so that we can believe the word spoken. Rom 5:5. Faith, working by *agape*, enables us to receive the illumination and instruction of the word as those who are spiritual.

Returning to our key point, only those who receive an [*agape*] love of the truth will be saved. Because the *agape* love of God is not resident within us, *we must firstly receive agape in order to apprehend the truth*. We are reminded of Jesus' words, 'If anyone [*agape*] loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. He who does not [*agape*] love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.' Joh 14:23-24.

Knowing the spirit of truth

The apostle John spent a great deal of time writing about the truth in his three epistles. In fact, he testified that his greatest joy was to hear of his children in the faith walking in the truth. 3Jn 1:4. John took pains in his letters to warn us about those who have *not* received a love of the truth. He said that anyone who claims to have fellowship with Jesus but walks in darkness, anyone who says that they have no sin, and anyone who says that they know Jesus but does not keep His commandments, lies and *does not practise the truth*. 1Jn 1:6,8. 1Jn 2:4.

Of note, John pointed out that *every son of God is accountable for discerning what is true* and what is false. He wrote, 'Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world ... We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. *By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*' 1Jn 4:1,6. Those born of God will recognise and listen to Christ's messengers. The mandate of these messengers is to teach and remind every believer about the word of truth. 2Pe 1:12. By listening to this teaching, sons of God learn the difference between holy and unholy, clean and unclean, and sanctified and unsanctified. Eze 44:23.

The word of the cross is not vague or uncertain. Nor is its application subject to personal interpretation. The word can only be met with one of two responses: obedience or disobedience. For this reason, Jesus instructed us to respond decisively to the issues of life by saying, either

'Yes, yes' or 'No, no', in response to the instruction of the word. Any answer that becomes more complex than 'yes' or 'no' is from Satan. Mat 5:37. Let us be clear. Satan loves indecision, he loves vacillation, he loves feigned misunderstanding, and he loves reinterpretation. These are open doors to his assault. He especially loves mind-chatter, through which he promotes anxiety, speculation and every lofty thought that is, ultimately, raised up against the knowledge of God. Those who receive a love of the truth, however, are not complex. Their devotion to Christ - His word and the culture that it establishes - is characterised by simplicity. 2Co 11:3.

Worship in spirit and truth

Having charged every son of God with the responsibility to know what is true and what is false, John continued his letter with the instruction to 'love one another'. 1Jn 4:7. Similarly, the apostle Peter linked the subject of 'knowing the truth' to 'loving our brethren', writing, 'Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart'. 1Pe 1:22. A person who is purifying their soul in obedience to the truth *is* receiving a love of the truth! This restoration occurs as they participate in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. While their self-centred other law is being circumcised from their fallen heart, the *agape* love of God is being poured in. The outcome of this process is the capacity for sincere appreciation - firstly, of God; secondly, of the name with which He has named them; and thirdly, of the names that He has given to their brethren.

We see that receiving a love of the truth is the foundation for sincere Christian friendship and brotherly love. It is the spiritual capacity to recognise and appreciate the name that God has given to each person. A friendship that is established and built on this foundation will be sanctified. The commitment to keep friendships grounded on this foundation, especially those headed toward, or already in, a courtship, will guard the relationship from fantasy. We recall the words of Jesus concerning how we are to worship (give worth). He said, 'God is Spirit, and *those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth*'. Joh 4:24. This culture of 'worship in spirit and truth' is not only reserved for our appreciation of God. It is, in fact, the culture of all true relating in the kingdom of God. Those who have received a love of the truth can offer toward sincere Christian friendships, because they are secure in the truth of their own name and are committed to knowing and honouring the true name of their brethren.

Article 3

Speaking the truth about love

Jonathan Thompson

Speaking the truth about love first requires an understanding, through illumination, of the true definition of love. This is something that is impossible to realise naturally. The presumption of every natural man is to believe in their own perspective of what love is. The result of such foolish presumption leads to all manner of aberrations in the true expression of love. These other expressions not only erode the identity of a son of God, but also vandalise the table of the Lord at His love feast by bringing the food of lies and deceit. Such ones profess, passionately, to be wise and, in doing so, reveal their foolishness because their hearts have become darkened. Rom 1:21-22.

'This is how we *know* what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.'
1Jn 3:16. *Knowing* what love is is clearly stated here by John. Christ is the first offering towards every person. In His offering, we are given the wonderful opportunity to offer back what He has already offered to us. This does not leave us empty (which would be the assumption under the

rules of trading) but, instead, multiplies the love of God in that fellowship of offering. We receive and then offer; this is our culture and life. The alternative is to trade through sorcery, which binds relationships through obligation and exploitation. There is no freedom in this mode of relating. However, when we join Christ's offering, we can, like Him, truly love one another. The truth about love is knowing that *its source is from God*.

'But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the Head, *even* Christ.' Eph 4:15. This Scripture is a roadmap showing us how to continue to develop and mature as a son of God. It is by our own unique participation that our sonship is realised, and the first aspect of that participation is simply to speak. As we engage in the conversation of *the* truth, the love of God is poured into our heart, and the grace of the Lord equips us to also further expand our participation in deeds. 1Jn 3:18.

As we continue to abide in the conversation of faith, and the love of God is being poured into our heart, we receive a love of the truth, because the truth now can abide in us. As Christ Himself said, 'I am the way, the truth and the life.' Joh 14:6. Put plainly, we must be born again, not of flesh, but of the Spirit. This is to have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us, enabling us to speak His faith in all contexts and circumstances. This is what it means to be 'hidden in Him'. This conversation happens by our knowing the Father Himself, specifically as love. This removes all carnal misappropriations of what love means.

'Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man brings out of *his* good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of *his* evil treasure what is evil. But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgement. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.' Mat 12:33-37.

We begin each day by meeting the Lord and speaking to Him in the truth of our sanctification for the day. The reality then must hit us as to how and what we continue to speak throughout each day, for out of the mouth speaks that which fills the heart. Importantly, our speech is a critical factor in becoming established and grounded as a son of God. The reason why we need the truth in us, and to speak it, is because, in darkness, our own understanding causes the truth to aberrate and to quickly become a lie. We see this clearly in Eve's own deception when she

engaged in a different conversation away from the tree of life. This darkness is not only a lack of articulation, but is also any alternative conversation that draws us away from truth through the trickery of men and their crafty schemes. These other conversations actually bring us under condemnation, and they devour the treasure of our sonship: the divine nature.

When God speaks, He speaks only truth, because that is His nature. The divine nature is truth. The gospel is true. This is a wonderful reality which allows every son to believe and to speak continually, because they have not only heard the truth but, also, they see the activity of it, daily.

The context of agape

The context in which God speaks is at the tree of life. This is important because, if we are to continue to mature in our conversation, and in our works, we must know how to abide at the tree of life. This is a place that we do not depart from, because to do so causes us to depart from the truth. Neither does the context for our conversation depend on who we are talking to. This means that we do not change our conversation in relation to another's emotional responses. This is part of expressing the love of God to another, which can often be rejected for a lie. Regardless, a son of God keeps their eyes fixed on Christ, their Head, not being foolish or naive enough to be drawn away from this as their context.

'God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.' 1Jn 1:5. The tree of life is in the light of fellowship, where, by faith, we can speak to and about anything in our life on which the Holy Spirit puts His finger. There are no hidden areas of shame. Walking in the light as He is in the light is also the context where we choose to meet, whether in our homes or at church, work, university, *agape* meals, prayer and devotions etc. Outside of the light of the fellowship of God is darkness, and darkness will overrun anyone who chooses to abide in it. Again, this has everything to do with how and what we each speak! Darkness causes our perspective to shift to what is elemental and, if we do not flee from it, we choose to believe a lie and we become children of Satan. The one who is deluded in this way will not see the sin that has entered their heart and will say that they have no sin, but the truth is not in them. 1Jn 1:8.

'Abiding in the light' is to stay in the conversation, meeting Christ, and not withdrawing.

How do we speak?

‘What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim [speak] to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us what we have seen and heard we proclaim [speak] to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.’
1Jn 1:1-5.

We speak the truth of what we have seen by the illumination of the Holy Spirit by applying all diligence in handling the word. This is not ‘workshopping’ the truth; it is being washed by the water of the word and letting it do its perfect work in us.

Our ‘yes’ is our ‘yes’ and our ‘no’ is our ‘no’ because we are constrained to speak only the truth, and we love the truth because we know that it has set us free! This daily choice allows us to meet the fellowship of Yahweh each day, and for our testimony to continue to mature and grow, bearing fruit in every season.

The word of testimony

‘And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.’ Rev 12:11.

That which we speak will also be unique and specific to our personal sonship. This is the word of our testimony. The truth of our circumstances is our testimony. It is from testimony that we see the evidence of the gospel proven. The joy of the Lord is made complete in us as we see the word coming alive in us. We know that we have the mercy of the Lord and the truth in us, and our hearts are filled with joy. We can worship Him in Spirit and in truth. We know our participation in the fellowship of the truth, which is the assurance of our sonship.

Our testimony is that we can proclaim eternal life. We have joined the fellowship and testimony of Christ Himself.

Believing the truth

The Scripture, 'Having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed, therefore I spoke," we also believe, therefore we also speak', is a key foundation for our speaking in faith. 2Co 4:13. We know the truth because we have heard it, we have seen it, and we ourselves have handled it; and so we continue to speak. This recognition also offers the opportunity for us to ask for help. This is a key point, as we each need help to receive the faith of God. This does not vary for any individual. In big or small circumstances, receiving a love of the truth requires a response in fellowship. This response is our faith to repent as we hear the word. We do not repent out of fear or condemnation, but out of our love for the knowledge of the truth, which is the glory of kings. We each, then, must learn to lift our voice for understanding.

The lie that Satan lives by

Anything that is not true is a lie, which is also to say that whatever is not from faith is sin. Rom 14:23. We are to speak only that which we know from meeting the Father, through the order of headship - which is to see Christ raised and lifted up. Having received a love of the truth, and eaten from the tree of life, we are to tarry, in order to remain there and to not draw back in unbelief.

'For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.' Rom 1:25.

In order to know how to speak the truth, there also needs to be an understanding of what is a lie; another alternative for conversation. We must be on guard that we are not drawn by such utterances, as well as making sure that we ourselves are not perpetuating them.

Satan disguises himself as an angel of light, and our self-righteous projections - ALL of which have deluded us - find a context in his lies to fill out their fantasy. In this alternative conversation, these ones make Satan their father by believing and speaking this lie. Joh 8:44. Satan's lie says that we can be like God, and it seeks to verify man by filling the void of his fallen desires. Satan beguiles man to believe that he can contend with God and that he has the truth in him. This plays on emotions, such as fear and desire, so that man might strive to control and take dominion over his life. In this conversation, sin becomes manifest in man and the truth no longer abides in him. If we join these alternative and emotionally

driven conversations, we fall into darkness and risk becoming overrun by demonic oppression.

‘You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies.’
Joh 8:44.

False love relationships

It is helpful to understand, by way of example, that a young adult who is committed to a discipleship program can relate in false love whilst projecting a spiritual demeanour. The person who exhibits such a false doctrine endeavours to conquer through criticism while, at the same time, uses jargon terms and phrases to further strengthen their spiritual projection of being a son of peace. These wolfish characteristics do in fact devour another, and they set a culture of relating according to peck order under false authority. Courtships, or any other individual relationships for that matter, that are established on these foundations are not grounded in love but, rather, through mutual trading. This is sorcery, and leads the relationship away from the love of the truth, as it cannot abide in such a context. Defensiveness and reactivity also seek to keep the relationship alive, in reaction to the love of God calling these ones to repent and to turn to the truth. Such false doctrines isolate a person from being able to receive the messenger and the message of Christ which they speak. These modes of conquering can be seen violating the *agape* meal through obligation to factions that are formed in darkness.

This is how we relate according to what is wise in our own eyes (our own understanding), what is pleasing to the eye (affirming identity projections) and what is good for food (able to sustain our weary and sick state). The Law is the ‘playground’ of Satan and of the Pharisee, whose leaven Christ warned us to be aware of; their hypocrisy. Luk 12:1. The Scriptures note, ‘Let love [which also includes the truth] be without hypocrisy.’ Rom 12:9.

Thankfully, we are learning to overcome the conversations at the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which bring us under judgement, resulting in condemnation and death.

Further, we are to gird ourselves in truth, as sons of God who know the voice that calls our name each morning and to whom we answer faithfully. We are of substance because we were not created to be like Satan, and certainly not to worship him; instead, we are created by God to fellowship with Him in simplicity and truth. We love the message of truth, and our affection for the faithful messengers of the Lord increases in us also!

The example of Job

The book of Job is a tremendous example to us of a man who exhausted all manner of conversations before finally coming to meet the Lord in true fellowship. In the beginning, Job was found to be blameless, upright, God-fearing, and to actively turn away from evil – a great resume in the spiritual sense! He was affluent in every way that is conceivable to man. However, before the end of the first chapter we see that he had lost it all. And, by the second chapter, we see that his health had also failed him through the hands of Satan.

There then proceeded to be a great deal of conversation between Job and his friends. Job commented on this discussion by saying, ‘Is there *no* limit to windy words?’ Job 16:4. It is not until the end of the book that we see that the Lord came to Job and directly answered him. ‘Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?” ’ Job 38:1-2.

Here, the Lord began to entreat a different conversation with Job, which is separate from the counsel and wisdom of man (including Job). The Lord revealed Himself to Job and challenged his complaints that arose from his own despair and emotional trauma, to correct him in who he truly was. The more the Father speaks to us, the more it exposes our darkened perspective. However, as we remain in the conversation, and do not retreat in despair, there is access to grace to overcome through meeting and knowing the truth of what God is saying to us. We are to labour here to abide in the conversation with Him without becoming defensive or having excuses and accusations. Job needed illumination to be able to understand how the Lord was revealing Himself to him. Even still, Job resisted meeting the Lord by His own command. In fact, he refused to speak with Him at all. But the Lord commanded Him to ‘gird up your loins like a man; I will ask you, and you will instruct Me’. Job 40:7. As the Lord continued to speak with Job, he became illuminated and was able to participate in this conversation.

THE CULTURE OF LOVE

'Then Job answered the LORD and said, "I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. *Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me.* I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You; therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes".' Job 42:1-6.

Job was able to meet the Lord as a *disciple*. He was able to know Him as He revealed Himself to Job. The pathway for Job was through repentance, in order to be able to converse in the truth with God. He was finally able to participate in *agape* fellowship with God. The Lord is calling all of us to speak with Him, and to be accountable for what we say. He is not asking us to come before Him and remain silent. Our participation is to be grounded in the truth of who God is, and in His specific faith toward us as His sons.

Article 4

God's sanctifying love

Tim Maurice

The sanctifying love of God is first love. This love is also known as *agape*. *Agape* is first love, which means that it is the source of all other loves. The other loves in the Greek language are called *eros*, *storge*, and *philia*.

As a result of the fall, and the lie that it deposited into the human heart, these loves lay claim to the place of first love. That is, each one of these loves is able to be promoted by Satan to the place of first love. Satan has no access to love and, therefore, he cannot produce his own version of it. His strategy is to direct our attention away from *agape* to one of the other three loves. All human beings have the capacity for these loves, so it is not difficult for Satan to convince a person that they, personally, are a source of love.

When our gaze is directed away from God as the source of love, we are unable to serve Him. Instead, we serve the thing that demands our attention. It is this thing that we serve and love. Another way of saying this is that this person or thing becomes our master and we its slave.

Jesus made it clear that we cannot serve two masters. He also stated, categorically, that the other three loves would obstruct any person from being His disciple: 'If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.' Luk 14:26.

Unless we see these loves for what they are – rivals to the love of God, and therefore potentially idolatrous – we will never be able to lay down our lives for God in offering. Instead, we will approach Him with our eyes fixed upon our idol, which is the person or thing that we love. Our deepest idolatry is the love of our self-image.

That is why we can say that the opposite of love is not hate. The opposite of love is self-love. Self-love is a result of the lie of Satan, that we can be like God. Believing that we can be like God, we attempt to fashion *ourselves* in the image to which we aspire. This is the idolatry which drives us to seek out the kind of love which will serve our self-image. We think that, in so doing, we will be served by those around us. Instead, we become slaves to sin and to the emotions which contribute to the mastery of the particular love that we serve.

Some examples

Men serving *eros* become slaves of sex, romantic emotions, the idea of finding a soulmate, marriage, false headship (ruling over their wife), seduction, body image, the next thing. Women serving *eros* become slaves of the desire for their husband, their power to seduce, body image, and flirtation.

Men serving *storge* become slaves of their children, their wife's demands, the idea of family, fear, their children's success, and their children's emotions. Women serving *storge* become slaves of their children, their husbands, the idea of family, their emotional control, fear, their children's success, and their children's emotions.

Men serving *philia* become slaves of mateship, offence, competition, equality, collegiality, and alliances. Women serving *philia* become slaves of the assessments of their friends, competitive desire, their friends' capacity to fill their void, and gossip.

Unless these loves are sanctified by *agape*, they will function according to the ruling principles of the world. These principles are strongholds of Satan, which fall under his influence and control. As such, these

principles are guided by *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life*. These are the lusts which belong to the world. 1Jn 2:16.

Because man cannot resist these lusts in his own strength, he believes them to be the truthful reflection of the way that the world is. In this way, the human loves which attach themselves to these lusts become his statements of ultimate reality. He reaches conclusions, such as, 'This is love', 'Love is all you need', and 'This is the way life is'. But these statements do not come from an understanding of the love of God.

God is love or love becomes a god

The love of God is only known by meeting God, who is love. When we meet Him, we see Christ lifted up on the cross, laying down His life for us. We see the love of God poured out for us, and we see God Himself, who *is* love. We understand that love is the very nature of God, which we must receive as a gift from Him.

However, Satan's lie inverts this reality, drawing people into the deception that *their* version of love is the ultimate authority in their universe. As such, *their* love becomes a god to them. This god is not a real god. It is a lie; but a lie directed by demonic spiritual forces. In other words, when love becomes our god, it also becomes demonic. This inversion by Satan is possible because people believe and practise his lie, that they can be like God.

This lie manifests in a form of wisdom, which is a way of thinking about the world and oneself. The wisdom which man concocts for himself is called 'the wisdom from beneath'. This false wisdom manifests in three stages - the conception of a false truth (natural), an activation of the senses and emotions (sensual), until it finally comes under the power of a demon. Jam 3:15. This is the nature of sorcery.

The equation is simple. Once a person believes that they can be like God, it must follow that the impulses, feelings and actions, which they call 'love', are what love 'is'. Thus, a person concludes things in this way: 'If there was a God, He would do such and such, and He wouldn't do such and such'. According to these judgements, man is the source of love, and he also possesses the right to put God's version of love on trial. The strength of his feelings make *his* idea of love true. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that his idea of love is moulded by the strength of his feelings.

It is important to remember, at this point, that the emotions which scream within a person that their feelings of love are ‘the truth’, are motivated by the poison of envy which demands to get what it wants. These are the emotions of sin. You want but you cannot have. Jas 4:1-2. These emotions of sin give demonic spirits free access to a person’s heart, allowing them to be enslaved to their own version of sensuality.

The sanctification of the love of God

The love of God does not scream about what it wants. Here is what the love of God looks like: ‘Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.’ 1Co 13:4-8.

And we can add even more to this description. We know that ‘God is love’. 1Jn 4:7-8. The love of God – called *agape* in the New Testament – is another word for God’s nature. The divine nature is love. Becoming a partaker of the divine nature means becoming a partaker of the love God. This is what it means to eat at the tree of life.

Therefore, the sanctifying love of God is *agape*. When we consider the totality of what love is, we observe that ‘God is love’. That is to say, we can only understand what love is by degrees, as we come to know God. As a result, we come to know and believe the love that God has for us. 1Jn 4:16. Knowing Him reveals His love for us.

Another way of looking at this is to say, ‘God is light’. 1Jn 1:5. As we come to know Him, the light that He is – which is to say, the *fellowship* that He is – becomes increasingly the fellowship in which we walk, or live. We walk in the light as He is in the light. The light of God becomes a pathway to us. This pathway of light introduces us to His word as a light-bringing instrument of fellowship; the entrance, or coming, of which, brings light. Psa 119:130. There is no shadow of turning in this love. There is no deception or trading whatsoever in this love.

Thus, walking in the light of the fellowship of the word is ‘a way’, or a pathway. The apostle Paul called this way, ‘the most excellent way’. This is the way of *agape*. This is the only way through which we can inherit eternal life. Christ was the full revelation of the Godhead bodily. He, therefore, revealed the love of God because God is love.

Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. Nobody comes to the Father except through Him. That is, nobody can become or live as a son of God except via this most excellent way. Jesus is the most excellent way because He is the love of God revealed to us. You will notice this quite easily if you read the above quote from Corinthians, replacing the word 'love' with 'Jesus'.

In practical terms, how do we know what this way looks like? The apostle John gave us very clear instruction on this subject: 'We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.' 1Jn 3:16.

We can say then that the most excellent way is seen, and participated in, through offering; through joining, in fact, the offering of Jesus Christ, to which we have access in His body, of which we have been made members.

Love proceeds to us from God. He is its source; we are its recipients. It is an aspect of the lie of Satan that we can manufacture and express love from within ourselves. As we have already said, the belief of this delusion drives men and women to choose one of the earthly loves as their version of ultimate love, chosen on the basis of their presumed god-like capacity.

This is why we need to have our conscience cleansed by the blood of Christ. A cleansed conscience is one that no longer judges anything on the basis of good and evil. A person whose conscience has been cleansed can be motivated by *agape* instead of envy. Having had the love of God poured into their heart, and possessing a good conscience before God, they can choose rightly. By contrast, when people are motivated by envy, the human loves represent themselves easily as alternatives to the love of God. They can clamour within our heart and can lay claim to supremacy, demanding our full devotion.

However, when our conscience has been cleansed, and the love of God has been poured into our heart, we can be motivated by the love of God, being constrained, compelled and directed by *agape*. Once this is the case, we are able to judge ourselves rightly with respect to our actions of love. We understand our sanctification, which is the will of God, and so the motive of *agape* orders our engagement in the expression of the other three loves.

Article 5

Sanctifying the other loves

Tim Maurice

The ending of our previous article leads us directly to the subject of God's sanctifying love. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to sanctify the expression of all forms of love. Let us consider briefly how this happens.

Eros

We can only express *eros* towards one other person, either in marriage or in the course of a courtship which is moving *towards* marriage. That is simple. In terms of its expression, we should not impose the dynamic of *eros* upon those around us. It is a largely private matter. The difficulty with *eros* is that its claim to supremacy is very strong. When it functions inordinately, it drags a person away from the other loves.

Eros is so powerful that it easily becomes the exclusive love. However, when ordered by *agape*, *eros* is the love which contributes the multiplication of godly seed. It is for this reason that it receives so much attention in the Scriptures. *Eros* is dangerous, but it is also responsible for the establishment of firstfruits households. It is vital, therefore, to understand how *eros* is, so to speak, to be 'handled'.

Examples from Scripture of *eros* 'running riot' are legion. Starting with Adam and Eve, you can then run all the way through the patriarchs, proceeding through to Ananias and Sapphira, and discover case after case of fallen *eros*. So, what is the answer?

Men are to love (*agapao*) their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. This is the clearest way of saying that a husband's *eros* can only be properly offered to his wife when he has joined the offering of Christ in *agape*. Women are joined to the love of God by being subject to their husbands in headship, because this is the order of love established in the offering of Christ back to God.

When men and women engage in *eros* with this as their sanctified disposition, a man can be delivered from ruling over his wife and she, in her turn, can be delivered from directing the demand of her fallen desire towards her husband.

Storge

With respect to *storge* (affection), the possibilities are much wider than *eros*. We all have, and are encouraged to show, affection to our brethren, for example. The most natural, and the strongest, avenues of affection are in the family: a parent towards their children, siblings to one another, children towards parents. The boundary between affection and the other loves is not exclusive. Godly affection colours and enriches all of the other loves. How could it be dangerous?

The fallen affection of Jesus' family towards Him was starkly expressed when they tried to bring an end to His ministry. The fallen brotherly love of Levi and Simeon motivated them to commit murder over the rape of their sister Dinah.

And when we turn to the descriptions of sibling relationships among the children of the Old Testament, we find that they are riddled with conflict, hatred, murder, avarice, sexual misadventure and general dysfunction. Many of the parents display favouritism, control, disdain, and sometimes loathing, towards their children. And we can recognise ourselves in many of these examples. How, then, can *agape* be engaged towards our affections?

The great example here is Jacob. Jacob and his brother Esau had about as bad a sibling relationship as two people can have. Jacob manipulated and cheated Esau; in return, Esau wanted, and kept trying, to kill his brother.

They were a dreadful pair. The only thing that redeemed Jacob was his willingness to keep turning to the Lord and to obey His voice.

Jacob was a real scoundrel; but he found redemption and surrendered completely to the Lord's naming of him. Esau, by contrast, never found a place of repentance, because he would not be accountable. Esau gave up his mission of vengeance upon his brother, but he found no peace. Jacob, by contrast, was wounded in fellowship with the Lord and learned to honour and love his brother.

We see the same thing taking place in the life of Joseph, Jacob's son, who was hated and foully treated by his brothers, but who offered them love and protection, even when it was within his power to take revenge. Like Jacob, Joseph had met the Lord God who is love.

Philia

Friendship (*philia*) is a foundational form of love. A friend is not an ally; a friend is, firstly, an obedient son of God. Allies form factions; friends walk in the fear of the Lord because they have seen God face to face. Before someone can be your friend, they must become the friend of God. When someone is your friend, the bond can be very close, often 'closer than a brother'. A friend is born for adversity and, therefore, holds fast under the pressure of suffering. Friendship, when nourished by *agape*, is, in some ways, the sweetest of the loves; but it is a form of love that we must learn by laying down our lives for our friends. Friendship comes alive when it is sanctified by *agape*.

The apostle Peter felt sure that he was Jesus' friend; that he had *philia* for Him, and that this was enough. Strong as it was, this love for Jesus failed Peter when he was put under extreme pressure. Peter had to die to his version of love and friendship. He needed to be converted from his self-sourced view of Jesus and be led by another in the 'way' of love. This 'way' leads to the cross, which was to be the 'manner' of Peter's death.

Jesus told us that we would be His friends if we kept His commandments. The two foremost commandments are to love the Lord and to love our neighbour. It is in this way that we find access to the blessing of true friendship. *Agape* orders the other loves and puts them in their *right place and their right proportion*. The *agape* meal is the context for this ordering to take place. We must eat each day at the tree of life in order to receive the capacity to love and to be loved.

Good and evil arbitrated through desire and fear

We know that the lie of Satan - that man could be like God - caused the human race to become convinced of their own versions of good and evil. These two ideas (good and evil) are the two forces which collide within the human heart to produce the tension and nervous disposition of every person; the idea of good manifesting in fallen desire (envy), the idea of evil coming through the fear of death.

Desire and fear are the drivers of the human loves. Unless we are delivered from the motivation of our envious desire and the fear of death, we will find it impossible to live the Christian life motivated by the love of God. As the apostle James wrote, the source of conflict among brethren comes from fallen desire. Jas 4:1-2. We want things, we cannot get them, and so we fight. That describes the human race at every level. Meanwhile, the apostle Paul wrote that Satan exercises power over men and women because they are in bondage to the fear of death. Heb 2:14-15.

However, we note that the ministry at the tree of life, through the fellowship of *agape*, is the cultural answer to these conditions. We observe a prototype of the *agape* meal when Melchizedek came to Abram with bread and wine. We learn in Hebrews that Melchizedek's name means 'King of Righteousness and King of Peace'. Heb 7:2. Righteousness and peace are elements of Christ's free gift to those who respond to the word of truth with faith. It is these virtues that are now ministered to us, through the *agape* meal, by Jesus Christ, whose free gift to us endows us with the shield of faith against fear, and who ends the war in our members by being our peace.

The conjunction of righteousness and peace is summed up by Paul this way: 'Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.' Rom 5:1-2.

The *agape* meal is our fellowship in the light. A family which fellowships daily in this way will find that the love of God is continually sanctifying the expression of their other loves to their appropriate place and to their appropriate proportion. And so it also goes for married couples, groups of friends and congregations. The apostle John gave us a wonderful summary of the love of God abiding in us: 'We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who

abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgement; because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because He first loved us.' 1Jn 4:16-19.

The Lord wants to perfect His love in us. His love will cast out the fear that binds us to the principles of the world and which drives us to save our own lives. It is evident that Abraham received the love of God when the Lord cast out the fear that was in his heart. The Lord gave Himself to Abraham as both his shield and his reward. Abraham's deliverance from fear enabled him to love the Lord, as well as his wife, Sarah. Restoration will come to our houses as we meet the Lord, and as we receive the word and the messengers that He sends to us.

Being sanctified by *agape* involves putting the Lord first in all things. This means giving Him pre-eminence in every area of our lives, instead of attending first to our earthly loves. If we love Him first, we will be able to love those around us as we ought. If we attempt to love Him, while still putting others in our life ahead of Him, we will end up not loving anyone. Our love for those around us will become a demand and our love for God a presumption. However, if we put Him first, we will receive, in return, the fullness of the other loves as a blessing which multiplies and abounds each day.

Article 6

Choosing to love

David Hall

Introduction

For some time now, the Spirit has been directing our attention to the nature of the fall of man and the subsequent culture of sorcery that resulted in us all, through the lie of Satan. We have been examining aspects of the effect of the lie, that Satan has fathered in every one of us, as a culture that is *earthly, sensual and demonic*. Jas 3:15. It is motivated by the emotion, or desire, that the apostle John described as *the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life*. He said that this is *all that is in the world, and it is not of the Father but is of the world*. 1Jn 2:16.

In Genesis 3:6, Moses described the origins of this desire in courtship and marriage as being:

1. '*Good for food*'; which we see as an alternative menu to the fellowship of Yahweh, which will give us what we desire – to be our own 'god', and to fashion an image or lifestyle of success for ourselves. When we believe this lie, we gain a sense of fulfilment, security and certainty that our definition of an appropriate and luxuriant *status quo* can be appropriated from this other person, object, or role.

2. *'Pleasant* [a charm, or charming]*to the eye.'* It is the object of our fascination, or desire. We seek after and promote an ideal image which we expect this person, object or role will provide for us. Perhaps we are pursuing a union or role that others will appreciate so that we are worshipped for this image. This could be the image of an ideal, or perfect, couple; a perfect lifestyle and success; a hubby, 2.2 kids, a house with a white picket fence; tea at 3pm with other gossipers while hubby does the school run.

Note: 'Prince Charming' was a term originally penned to describe the enchantment placed upon him by the beauty of Sleeping Beauty. She charmed him, and so he was called, by popular opinion, Prince Charming. It is notable that a peer or social group opinion was expressed in this fabled account, reflecting the community at large.

3. *'Desirable* [meaning 'to covet, to desire, or desire to be desirable'. This can be an aggressive or a passive action to try to become the object of someone's affection. At best, this indicates an adolescent mentality] *to make one wise.'* Gen 3:3-6. The delusion in this person means that they presume to be the source of their life and of the life of others, just like God. These ones are always working to create solutions and an image for themselves that will satisfy their need for verification as all others look on and worship them for their god-like capacity.
4. *Adam* listened to the voice of Satan coming from his wife's mouth as she justified this threefold delusion, and this became the fallen and default culture for all of mankind, since all were now separated from the life of God. The implication here is that 'wrath and doubting' became the expression of a man's wrestle with the futility of the ground that was now refusing to be fruitful in the way he desired. 1Ti 2:8. All attempts to produce what he believed to be right for himself and his family (which in his mind *must* be the will of God, because God *agreed* with him in his own mind) did not yield the fruit of success that he had imagined for himself. As a result, he became angry and blamed the woman whom God gave to him; thus she became the object and outlet for his anger and control.

Adam was able to resolve his anger and to regain fellowship with God, teaching this culture to his son, Abel. Eve, however, did not come to the same resolution for quite some time. Her parallel, romantic culture produced another angry young man in Cain. And Christ's words were fulfilled. 'For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother,

mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.' Luk 12:52-53.

These reactions became enshrined within us all as the expressions of the other law. Men hear that Adam did this, and do not believe that it is them! Women hear what Eve did and do not believe that it is them also! The words of the apostle Peter become loud in our minds when we remember these words and think, in light of all this, 'What manner of persons ought we to be?' 2Pe 3:10-13.

Infatuation

I will now direct your attention towards the 'thorny' subjects of 'going out', and 'courtship', through the subjects of friendship and romance. Now, if you are younger, and aware that there are disciplines that you need to put in place before you would testify in all good conscience that you are marriageable, don't go to sleep, because you know that since you were very young, you have understood infatuation.

Infatuation is the desire to be charmed and verified by something or someone else; to receive the focus of desire or to act to become the focus of another's desire. This verification of your enchanted (bewitched or deceived) need gives you a sense of security. This is an aggressive initiative and not a benign 'falling in love' event.

Actually, there is no benign or accidental 'falling in love' event. Even a romantic 'spark', or attraction, should occur in an *agape* fellowship in which headship is governing the parameters of meeting. That is to say that both the man and the woman are found in the fellowship of headship and as individuals submitting themselves to the word of the Father at the tree of life in order to find His wisdom for their pathway forward, which may include Him building their house with them. Psa 127:1.

As a young child, examples of infatuation might include:

- not being able to sleep without a dummy
- the need for 'teddy' to always be present and huggable, with chewable arms
- being in love with a favourite slipper while despising its partner
- the familiar feeling of a favourite blanket or cloth nappy - chewing one corner and playing with another
- licking the air-conditioned windows at floor level, knowing the verifying companionship of the dog who is doing the same on the other side etc.

This is the desire produced by Satan's lie, and through the fall of man and woman, expressed in the responses of our childhood. We can observe that every behaviour is reinforced by the assumption that 'the whole world revolves around me', and that any attempt at instruction or discipline to the contrary will result in a howling objection with many tears. (And we sometimes catch ourselves responding this way now, don't we?)

Obedience to the word of the Father that comes to these children through their parents in a training action is their deliverance from these sensual addictions. This is no different for us all as we increase in age, for we all come into the kingdom 'as a little child'. Mat 18:2-7. And we need to understand ourselves at every stage of our life. Ultimately, the word of the Father coming to us through the headship of the presbytery into our *agape* fellowship and faith conversation at the tree of life is our deliverance from the fatherhood of Satan, and from these desires as they manifest in our 'son of God', day to day, living.

As we mature throughout our life, we come to understand that the context and provision for our life is through the word of the Father. Through the *agape* life that He gives to the Spirit to pour into our heart in the fellowship of headship from the presbytery to our homes, we can grow and mature as a son of God. As we do this, we can also deal with our false and default needs and demands which belong to the thorny ground of our heart. In other words, we should not be of courting age and be still looking for and demanding attention from our 'teddy-bear'!

If we do not receive and live by the offering love that is the *agape* life of God, we will be driven by the thorny priorities that are defined by fear and anxiety. These priorities are dictated by the fear of missing out; e.g. 'How come I didn't get any ice cream?' or 'Everyone else is getting married!' These are the cares of this world, riches or wealth, and the pleasures of life. All of these pursuits prevent an individual from maturing as a son of God. Pro 22:5. Mat 13:22-23. Luk 8:14-15.

'Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.' Luk 8:14.

Now, when it comes to understanding how *agape* works in relation to:

1. Choosing friendships
2. Choosing exclusive friendship
3. And even assessing true romance,

before courtship can occur, we need to understand these motivations in a more mature manner.

Friendship difficulties

Consider the following examples of friendship complexities that may be detrimental to the relationship progressing.

1. *Romance dictating*: it is true to say that romantic attraction and preference *will* occur in any relational grouping, and that not many young people will be completely objective when it comes to the opposite sex. Many young people put themselves under pressure purely because they are still allowing the romantic attraction to dictate whether or not they will respond to offers of friendship. Christian young people should be able to take this reality 'on board' and to lay romantic attraction aside in an attitude of faith for the Lord's will. In this way, each one can be encouraged to relate widely and not only according to infatuation or attraction, as though these are the measure of reality.

In responding to a friendship invitation, mature adults should realise that a single invitation is not a marriage proposal. They should be free to 'go out' for the purpose of promoting friendship, without being caught up in a confused, quasi-courting relationship.

2. *Possessive anxiety*: the primary sign of immaturity is the desire to 'possess' the other as a romantic friend. Once attraction begins, a desire grows to 'win the prize'. This desire is driven by the fear of disappointment, and is fuelled by belief in one's ideals. Notably, this kind of possessiveness turns into disinterest once the prize is realised.

The antidote to this kind of romantic mindset is the exercise of sincere Christian faith toward the future. If one truly trusts in the Shepherd of all relationships, then rest and confidence should prevail.

3. *Whether or not to 'go out'*: there are important considerations as to whether a woman should say 'yes' or 'no' to an invitation. For instance, if she knows that the man has an interest in her, her answer instantly has meaning and implications. If she has no interest, and after a few outings is still not interested, then she will need to be careful that she is not agreeing to his invitations merely because she is flattered or is enjoying the romantic adventure. She must understand the lines of sanctification that will protect the relationship. Both parties would do well to remember that 'going out'

once or twice does not mean that they are under any obligation to court. There must be a freedom to develop friendship, to meet each other in faith, and then to seek the will of God concerning marriage.

4. *Family expectation*: in some instances, family expectation may become a problem during the development of a friendship. For instance, where a man visits a woman at her home and is embraced by the family, the friendship can become pressured by the perceived expectation of the family. Often, the family assume incorrectly that the friendship is a promise of courtship. Family expectation may increase with every contact, and the couple may feel pressured into a relationship that is before its time or that is one not of their choosing. It would be preferable for the couple to get to know each other in an easy social setting, while still maintaining openness toward the family.
5. *Status ambition*: another problem that may occur in the area of friendship and 'going out' is where one chooses a partner based on ministry or service ambition or expectation. The same could be said for lifestyle ambitions. Paul made a good point about this issue with a few simple verses in 1 Corinthians 7:32-34. He explained that the focus of the single person should be on the house of the Lord, while married partners must expand their focus.

We would agree that service and ministry in the house of the Lord is an exemplary goal for every person. However, courtship is for marriage. Courtship is not a vehicle for one to pursue a ministry or service ideal. If a couple were to marry, based only on the perceived status of a ministry or service expectation, their bond would become tenuous if the expected ministry position was not attained.

Answering the friendship question

If a couple have established a friendship within godly parameters, and an interest in each other is realised, it is now time to express further clarity. Where is this relationship going? This clarity is essential, as all relationship is part of the Christian pilgrimage. Do the two have a conviction to proceed forward; or do they remain as they are, as good, Christian friends? The question that the couple should be able to answer with certainty is, 'Do we have a genuine friendship; one in which we have properly met one another, and one which can stand the test of time as it continues in Christ?' The romance question now becomes an indicator of whether or not this relationship can move forward.

Article 7

Family love

Richie Kaa

At this time, every family who belongs to the heavenly city, Mount Zion, is being urged to embrace the cleansing and sanctifying initiative of the Lord, who is coming among us in a spirit of judgement and burning. The Lord is coming to us in this way so that we are made ready for the great and terrible day of the Lord. A key feature of His coming is the restoration of the Elijah ministry (a feature of an overcoming presbytery) for the purpose of turning 'the hearts of the fathers to the children' and the hearts of 'the disobedient to the wisdom of the just', thereby enabling the recovery of fellowship in individual families, in order that the *agape* meal may be fully restored as a house-to-house fellowship in the church. Luk 1:17.

From the outset, we know that the Lord God loves family. He demonstrates this love by offering to every believing couple a portion of His Spirit, because He seeks godly offspring. Mal 2:15. His support for believing families is confirmed by their place within the order of headship, substantiated in the Scripture that 'all the families of the earth will be blessed', by walking in the steps of believing Abraham. Gen 12:3. Gen 28:14. The point is, unless each family is firstly restored to daily

fellowship at the tree of life (even to three generations), there can be no turning to a full and proper participation in the *agape* meal.

For this reason, we must guard the *agape* meal from becoming a new sacrament, where a time-constrained morning tea ritual becomes the new portal for blessing. The true measure of our restoration to His *agape* meal, in heavenly places, will be our growing confidence in the culture of the kingdom. The primary marker of this culture is a maturing expression of the divine nature, including faith to speak the truth according to the offering love of God. That is, faith to speak up and address any matter of obligation, oppression, and dysfunction; to resolve hurts and offences; to surrender long held opinions; and to honour and receive the unique expression of each member as a demonstration of friendship love toward the nuclear and extended family.

One of the very important questions that we will focus upon in this article is how the offering love of God (*agape*) finds expression among believing families. This is because there is still much confusion in the church around the issue of friendship love within families. In fact, there remain two confusing extremes concerning the expression of love among believing families. And both extremes refuse to accept offering love as the basis for all the other loves, confusing then the ways in which families (nuclear and three generations) meet, engage, and express care and affection.

At one end, we have those who remain obligated to their family, and the powerbrokers who enforce strict compliance with their charade by threatening strained affection for any deserving traitor. These ones insist on pursuing a thorny-ground gospel which refuses to honour the choice of those who have rejected God's covenant purpose, and who insist on calling godless family members 'my people'. While at the other end, there are those who have unaccountably distanced themselves from fellowship and friendship with their family, assuming that the *agape* culture in the church has relieved them of their first (love) priority toward their family.

Central to this discussion is the need to accept the different forms of love that are part of the human experience. In New Testament Greek there are four key words for love, which CS Lewis famously explored in his text, *The four loves*. The key point that we must understand concerning our focus is that there is an order and priority that the believer must take hold of if they are to navigate these treacherous waters. Put simply, the offering love of God must be the first, or priority love for the believer in order that they may navigate every other love.

In fact, unless offering love is their starting point, then every other love will corrupt. Avoiding this kind of corruption is only possible when they are prepared to sell all (lean not on their own understanding) and take Christ's yoke (trust in the Lord), which He offers to them so that they might learn from Him. If they refuse, then they will quickly depart from the simplicity that is in Christ. Mat 11:29. 2Co 11:3. This is because they will believe that love, in its various forms, is theirs to dispense as if they were the source. But when they are established in the culture of God's offering love, all the other loves harmonise and are protected from going 'rogue'.

First love

Let us take a step back to first consider the loss, and then also the recovery, of first love. Ephesus was the first church that Christ addressed in the book of Revelation. The primary focus of His address was their abandonment of first love. Rev 2:4. In fact, so essential was it for the proper working of the church that they were asked to remember from where they had fallen (heavenly places), and to repent and do the first works, lest their lampstand be removed. Somewhere, they had departed Christ's command to 'love one another as I have loved you'. Joh 15:12.

It is only in His address to the Philadelphian church that we hear of a group who had overcome the various shortcomings of the other churches, which included their recovery to offering love. The outcome was that they were defined as a church of brotherly love. This is an important point; that offering love becomes friendship love among the brethren. Their ministry of brotherly love was, very likely, expressed to their Laodicean brethren who were in desperate need. They initially thought that they were rich and in need of nothing. Until Christ came to knock on the door of the church to tell them that they did not know how to love as He loved, they remained completely deluded. But upon receiving Christ's rebuke, we can assume that the church in Laodicea opened their door to receive the overcoming Philadelphian presbytery who, in the spirit and power of Elijah, came among them to establish the culture of offering love. The effect would have been a repentant church growing in friendship love for their brethren, within their own families.

In this season, we too are inviting those with the ministry of Elijah to come among us so that we can purchase this oil, and so that we might be fully restored to the culture of offering love, demonstrated as those who are filled up with brotherly love and friendship, particularly among families.

No greater love...

So how does this offering love look and behave? We have been learning through this season that the culture of *agape* is the culture of the kingdom, and that it is relationally expressed as friendship love. We gain insight concerning the nature of this offering love when we consider the words of Christ during His earthly ministry. He said, 'This is My commandment, that you love one another [in the same way] as I have loved you. Joh 15:12. Christ was commending His disciples to learn the culture of love by which He loved them. Earlier in John's Gospel, Jesus also gave insight concerning this love, saying, 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.' Joh 10:11. Jesus again confirmed the nature of this love describing the greatest love as that which motivates a person to lay down their life for their friends. Joh 15:13. The apostle Paul continued this theme, noting that God proved His love for us in 'that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us'. Rom 5:8. Importantly, John added that this is how we know what love is, 'because He [Jesus] laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren'. 1Jn 3:16. It is apparent from these Scriptures that offering love is the culture of how God lives, and the evidence that it has been received is that it empowers the recipient to do likewise. That is, it grants the disciple the capacity to lay their life down, demonstrated as they prefer and reveal another.

First things first

However, offering love will only become the first and foremost love when obligation (motivated by the fear of death) to the other loves has been resolved. This is why Jesus said, 'If anyone comes to Me and does not *hate* (loves them less than the Lord) his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and (love less than the Lord) his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.' Luk 14:26. Jesus also said, 'He who loves his life (i.e. seeks to preserve his life) will lose it, and he who *hates* his life (loves it less than the Lord) in this world will keep it for eternal life.' Joh 12:25. The use of the word 'hate' refers to our choice to love not our own life even when faced with death in its many forms. And when we live this way the divine nature is what springs forth, cancelling our presumption to be a source of all things, including love.

Baptism

Our confusion about love is due to the mix of expectation and obligation, which produces strong emotion and reaction, and we cannot resolve this

until we are willing to surrender our instinct for self-preservation, which is only addressed by baptism. Jesus said that whoever desires to save his life (self-preserve) will lose his life, but he who desires to lose his life (by dying daily with Christ) will find it. Our only hope, then, is to die with Christ and be raised with Him to walk in a new kind of way. This is the basis of His invitation, that we might take His yoke and learn of this new kind of life. And He will teach us how His offering love works.

Sibling rivalry

One very common dilemma repeated in the Old Testament among the families of faith was the rivalry and murderous hatred between siblings. And this remains a major issue among us. It is also important to note that it is not just an issue for young children or teens. Rather, it is a matter that can persist long into our adult years. The primary issue undergirding this rivalry is the issue of sanctification. The Lord has set each one apart, and He works in them to will and to do for His good pleasure. Php 2:13. It is for this reason that we surrender any sense of ownership, and therefore the right of an opinion, concerning a family member's name and works. Each of us has been bought with a price; therefore, we are exhorted to glorify God in our bodies, and to also avoid becoming enslaved to men (including their opinions of us). 1Co 6:20. 1Co 7:23. Proximity to family gives us no say or right to confirm or refuse the office they have been appointed to in life. Such a mindset is motivated by envy and activates all manner of sorcerous practices, which can bring entire families under oppression.

Refusal to accept and walk in one spirit with a sibling or family member according to their unique calling was well depicted in the life of Jesus where, on several occasions, He was deemed by His family to be mentally unstable, disloyal to the family fortress (projection), and demon possessed by many others. The treatment of Joseph by his jealous brothers is a further example of the destructive nature of siblings when disengaged from the son-of-God mindset that is learning to honour the sanctification of each one.

Implications

Let us first make a brief comment on those who have rejected Christ. Jesus said that in the end times the love of many will grow cold. We must accept that when love grows cold, it will impact how we meet and relate with these ones. Those seeking to preserve their life (style) and trade, will seek, by any means, to stay connected to those who are 'cooling'. This

presents a unique challenge for the believer, as they must choose whether they will be drawn by their own self-centred desire for acceptance and affirmation from these ones. In contrast, those who are receiving the offering love of God into their heart, are able to free these ones to their own choice. This is because they have accepted that parental love, and the specific role of a mother or a father, never trumps the offering love of God.

What about those who are outside of Christ and who are dead in trespasses and sin? We will be careful not to join their culture, acknowledging that we are children of light and are each equipped from the *agape* meal to shine in this dark world. Accordingly, Jesus said, 'Let your light so shine before men, *that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*' Mat 5:14-16.

Many of us in our family situation, have become weary and heavy-laden in our efforts to pursue the projection of a happy and broadminded family that, in the name of love, can roll with even the most unsanctified expressions. But at what cost? What compromises have you made to pursue and uphold this projection? We must give great attention now to any relationship that tempts us to trade, with the offer of receiving affirmation and acceptance from any person other than Christ. This kind of confusion occurs when we are still invested in the success of our own idol. The Lord is addressing us in a similar manner to the parable of the rich, young, ruler. He is asking us to sell all (of our strategies) in order that we might come to Christ and follow Him as His disciple. It is only as we are joined to His offering journey as those who are yoked to Him that we will learn to love as He loves. Importantly, it is by this, and only this, that all men will know that we are His disciple; it will be in the way that we love one another.

Life laid down in family

Our understanding of *life laid down* can, at times, become a little confused. For example, it is common to think of this phrase in the more lofty and noble settings such as those played out during a wartime conflict or as a person risks their life in the rescue of another. But, for the most part, this term will more typically include the courage to initiate conversations about the things that we simply do not talk about. These would include the unclean practices that persist within our homes; the oppressive conversations that we allow at our dinner tables; the mixed company that we keep, particularly with those who are in opposition to the messenger. It includes the alternative attitudes and views we hold

concerning certain cultural matters, and it also will include the guarding of our homes from welcoming any sorcerous attitudes, conversations, and behaviours.

Offering love is the basis of all true friendship. Indeed, any concept of friendship that excludes the laying down of life is just a secular alternative that employs the sorcerous practice of trading to affirm and realise our idol. In this way, true friendship is only possible among Christ's disciples. This is based upon Christ's statement that His friends are those who do as He commands. In this respect, a friend of Christ should be a friend of every other disciple. Put plainly, these are the ones who have obeyed the command to 'come out from among them and be separate'. 2Co 6:17. Indeed, *these are our people* and include those within our immediate and extended family.

Conclusion

Our premise throughout this publication is that *agape* love is the basis of all true friendship. In this respect, we must begin to see the order of headship as a fellowship of friendship where the offering love of God is granting capacity for every young adult to pursue true friendship with the messenger (no longer clinging with deceit), and true friendship with their parents and family members. But just hearing this proclaimed will not be enough. None of us are in a position to simply live by this love on the basis of our own effort. As Jacob, we are seeking His face and, as we do, He is meeting us with the initiative to recover us to the full expression of *agape* fellowship within our families. But please note; this kind of blessing is only given to those *who have become bankrupt in spirit*. This means we have come to reality concerning our true condition and, in humility, can cry out to the Lord for mercy.