

By This Shall All Men Know You

The Proper Relationship with God

John O. Reid (1930-2016)

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Shortly after we first came into the church my wife and I talked about a trip to Alaska. We saved our money, and I had vacation time, so we went on a cruise. We visited Ketchikan, Juneau, and Sitka. The only thing that was wrong was there was no one in the church there. It is hard to enjoy yourself without somebody of like mind to talk to, and even though we made friends on board the ship, we still longed for somebody in the church to be there.

If you have not been on a cruise, it is a giant hotel on the water and they feed you sumptuously. They told us when we came on board that we would come on as a passenger and would go home as a piece of cargo. They were right. Somehow the salt air caused my trousers to shrink and some of my shirts. They fed us, and every breakfast was just marvelous. One or two nights they had a midnight chocolate party with chocolate of every description and kind that you could possibly want. Of course we avoided that, but it was really something.

Of all the three ports that we visited (Juneau, Ketchikan, Sitka) the one that I really liked was Sitka. It is on a warm current and in the wintertime they do not get much lower than 45 degrees. In the summer they do not get above 65 degrees. They have islands all over there with beautiful trees and a lot of water ways. It is a quaint little town and I really enjoyed it.

While we were in Sitka we went through the Indian museum of, the Tlingit Indians and we enjoyed seeing the history of that. I wanted to mention today an Indian ritual. When a Tlingit Indian son turns 12, 13 years old, they would place their son on an island with his bow and arrows, fishing gear and knives, and perhaps a blanket and they would leave him there for one year to learn survival. It would be hard for us to do that. We in Southern California, cannot picture the total silence. Once that cruise ship passed that inlet it was total silence, there was nothing. And even today there is nothing there except maybe a jet 35,000 feet in the air flying over.

I know that we would fear to place our sons on an island like that even if they had skills and leave them there for one year, because the population of bears of every kind out rate the population of humans by two or three times. They have brown bears and black bears. At the end of the year, they would paddle back to the island to see the welfare of their son. Perhaps they saw smoke in the meantime.

The purpose of this was of course to make Indian boy into a man, sharpening his skills so much very much needed to survive in that kind of a country, in the wilderness. He was to learn to hunt, fish, build a shelter, make clothes, and to keep from being eaten by the bears. Above all, he was to develop confidence in his ability to survive and provide for himself and his future family. In this he would become a valuable asset to his family, and to the community that he lived in.

As I thought about it, how we do when we are in God's church, we think about things like this, this seems like something that God did. I could not help but think that God has placed us on this island called earth to learn something before we are accepted back into the community.

I was going to speak on the three things that God wanted us to learn while we are here on this island, Earth. First, have a right relationship with God. Second, have a right relationship with each other. Third, to have a right relationship with things. By this I mean the environment we live in, animal life, things that God gives us to take care of.

I thought of the three things, having a right relationship with each other would be the easiest to speak on. Having been in sales I thought I was pretty good at talking to customers and things of this nature.

And then I looked over the last four years of being in the church. When I was in the Garden Grove church of the Worldwide Church of God for twenty-five years, we never had one conflict. Pastors would come in and say, "What's wrong with this congregation? The deacons and the elders aren't fighting. What's wrong with you?" I could not see why anyone would fight.

The first three years in the Church of the Great God was a different matter. We had doctrinal [issues] over government, we had those who wished to change what had been taught by Mr. Armstrong. I think the first year we had 48 requests to change doctrine. I thought of the everyday offenses that come up as well and the hurt and the damage that can be done from them and I began to see that maybe Point Two needed to be spoken on. Because in a large church those that do not agree can go off in a corner and form new friends, but in a church of our size we cannot do that. We must get rid of the offenses.

The more I thought about it the more I realized if we do not have a right relationship with each other, we *cannot* have a right relationship with God. So I decided to skip subjects one and three and spend the sermon time on Point Two: the absolute necessity of loving one another.

John 13:34-35 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Rather an astounding statement. I will read something from *Barnes' Notes* on this. This command He gave them as He was about to leave them was to be a badge of discipleship, by what they might be known as His friends and followers, by which they might be distinguished from all others. It is called new, not because there was no command before which required man to love their fellow man, for one great precept of the law was that they should love their neighbor as themselves (Leviticus 19:18). But it was new because it had never been made that by which any class or body of men and women had been known and distinguished or identified.

In other words, this was going to be the identifying mark that would tell people that they were Christians, that they belong to Jesus Christ. The priesthood was known by their robes, our mailman is known by his uniform, as well as the firemen, soldiers, but God's people would not be known by their dress, wealth, position in the world, or rank in the church, but by the

love and concern they held for one another. This is how they would be identified by God—think about that—and this love is what the world would notice.

I will read what Adam Clark says about this:

From this time forward this mutual disinterested love [freedom from self-seeking and personal bias, impartial and objective], shall become the essential and distinctive mark of all My disciples. When they love one another with pure hearts fervently, even unto death, then it shall fully appear that they are the disciples of that person who laid down His life for His sheep, and who became by dying, a ransom for all.

The disciples of different teachers were known by their habits, some particular creed, or point of austerity which they had adopted. But the disciples of Christ were known by this love which they bore toward each other. The early Christians were particularly known by this among the Gentiles. Tertullian in his apology gives us their very words. “See,” said they, “how they love one another and are ready to lay down their lives for one another.” This is what the Christians were known by.

Brethren, Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another.” Could the opposite be true as well? If you do not love one another, you are not My disciples. This should put chills down our back.

What kind of love are we to have toward one another? Jesus Christ said, “that we love one another as *I* have loved you” I want to spend the first half of this message basically on how Jesus Christ showed His love.

Matthew 4:17-22 From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” They immediately left their nets and followed Him. Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the

son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

First, He showed His great love for us by calling us and His disciples out of all the people on the face of the earth. God the Father drew these men to Jesus Christ. What were they like? Were they filled with godly character? Were they sinless? These men were fishermen. These people were not the refined people of society, they are rough and tough. First, He called them, what were these men like? They were just like us.

I Peter 4:3-4 For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles when we walked in licentiousness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolaters. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.

In the past we followed our own wicked ways in whatever we wanted to do, in our own perverted habits. We lived as the rest of mankind did. We pursued our own will. We indulged ourselves in whatever desires we felt we wanted to. We drank as much as we wanted, had our opinions on how to live, we had our prejudices, our hatreds. And we developed all the wrong character. This was from the wrong perspective; it was from the way of man.

Colossians 3:5-9 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you also once walked when you lived in them. But now you must also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.

The apostle Paul is saying, we must kill the seed of all these evil desires in our bodies, and he reminds us in verse 7 we too walked the way of this world. We are to put off, basically, what comes naturally.

Jeremiah 17:9 “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?”

It was in this terrible condition that God loved us so much that He called us, and it was in this terrible condition that God loved the disciples, and the world that He called them.

Romans 5:6-8 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. [at Passover we usually mention that we have our name put after “ungodly”] For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

We had nothing to offer Him, and yet His love was so great that He set us an example by giving His life for us. While we hated Him, while we were making mistakes, Christ, in patience and great love, died for us. There is a lesson and example here for us today in the way we conduct ourselves with each other. We are to be patient and able to love others even though they may be making mistakes and doing things wrong.

Ephesians 4:30-32 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you.

The second way that Christ loved His disciples was that He taught them and set a right example to follow. The disciples had a special privilege that we do not have. They got to be with Christ day in and day out, for three and a half years. They could see Him conduct Himself around the campfire, they could be taught by Him, they watched Him eat, deal with the poor and the rich, they watched Him deal with leaders. It was a tremendous opportunity to learn just by observation, and in all of this they still made mistakes.

Matthew 5:1-2 And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Then He taught them a new principle regarding love.

Matthew 5:44 “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.”

That is a pretty tough thing to do.

The Jews felt that they should love their own but hate their enemies, and they loved those who they approved of who did things that they thought should be done, and this type of love was easy, it did not require any special effort. It was complacent love. But the type of love being commanded here is when we wish another well, but we cannot approve of his conduct. This is the love we are to love our enemies with.

In verse 44, the word bless means not to curse in return. Love your enemies and bless those who curse you. Speak of the good things that can be said of one’s enemy. As my mother used to say, if you have nothing nice to say, say nothing at all. If they spitefully use you, they take you to court, they injure you, do not return that. Paul amplifies the teaching of Jesus Christ in Romans 12 and I think you will find this interesting.

Romans 12:17-20 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. [this is one of the most difficult principle to follow, do not render evil for evil, do not get even. This world does not even begin to understand this principle.] If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath;

for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. Therefore, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.”

“Provide honest things” (KJV). The sense is to meditate before you get into a confrontational type meeting. Meditate in your mind and plan in your thinking not to have a mind that wants to retaliate. Have it settled to in your mind to behave the way God does. This takes a lot of understanding.

In referring to our conduct, have an honest attitude even to those who have wronged us. Set our minds to react in a courteous way, friendly, so that we will not be taken off guard and respond in kind to those who are against us. This is really difficult. We should conduct ourselves like this so our fellow man will approve of us as being honest and righteous. Even though they might be all against us, our response will be known as gentle, kind, not a get even response, and did not seek revenge. This is the attitude that we are to have.

Live peaceably with all men. Do your part and go overboard to live peaceably.

We are not to take vengeance, take no action to afflict pain, or injury on those who injure you or offend you. We are not to take the situation out of God’s hands. We are not to administer what we consider to be justice, that is not our duty. God knows the type of vengeance to administer. He knows the individual’s inner being, his heart, and He knows the correction that will produce the most good in the individual, now and in the future. And we, brethren, do not know.

If your enemy hungers or thirsts we should feed him, show him what right actions are. That is the intent of all of this. We are to show what right actions are, set the right example by our conduct. The intent is that with time they will realize that you were kind to them when they treated us like dirt. And they will repent.

Do not be overcome with evil but overcome evil with good. Do not let an evil situation cause you to abandon being like God. Do not let any situation cause you to have hatred and vengeance, overcome evil by following the

example of Jesus Christ. This applies when dealing with our families, in the world, and in the church.

Matthew 5:44-46 “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do so?”

What reward have you if you only greet those who love you? If we are to show love to our enemies and do not do it, this affects our reward. We are not to be doing what the world does. We should be doing as God does and show kindness, gentleness, to our enemies. Just loving those who love you is a selfish love, not requiring any effort. Loving those who do not love you takes great effort and builds godly character. This is what Jesus Christ is showing. He brings out the tax collectors and the publicans, the scum of the earth as far as the Jews were concerned. He said, even they greet their own kind with kindness, and if that is all you do to your kind then you are just like they are.

Barnes' had a comment here on this. He said,

Christians should do more, they should show that they have a different spirit. They should treat their enemies as well as a wicked man greets their friends. This should be done because it is right, and we should be showing that our religion is not selfish, but superior to all other principles of action.

To sum up Christ's lesson, we are to extend our love and concern for the well being of all men equally and in doing so we imitate God the Father and Jesus Christ. To become perfect, we must do this.

Matthew 5:47-48 “And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

The word perfect here means to be finished, to be complete, to be pure, to be holy. Originally it applied to mechanisms, to have all the parts to a mechanism present. As applied to us it means completeness of our part to perfection where no part is wanting or defective. We are to imitate God the Father, then we will be perfect. Because Christ sends that love to those that were against Him.

Does this mean we are to be doormats? Never standing up for what is right? Of course not. We have the example of Jesus Christ as He turned over the tables of the money changers. I imagined that they were scared to death. I would imagine too that afterward they reflected He was right. We have made this Temple a house of merchandise.

In Matthew 23, Jesus Christ had a chance to address the Pharisees. He ripped them from one end to another. In all of this He was not out for vengeance. He was telling them what was right for them to hear. And He sent the money lenders an example of what was right. Even David in his psalm, said, "Let not this man's house continue." He did not do it, he told God what he wanted, but he let God make the decision. See, vengeance did not belong to David either. They had an example of Jesus Christ living what He taught.

Luke 9:51-56 Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?" But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. [anger, vengeance, killing, does not belong to God] For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." And they went to another village.

Barnes' had an interesting comment on this. He said, "It is rather a love of revenge rather revengeful feelings toward the Samaritans than proper feelings toward Jesus Christ." He said, "we learn here that apparent zeal for

God may be only important in opposition toward our fellow man. And, men when they wish to honor God, should examine their spirit and see if there is not lying down at the bottom of their professed zeal for God, some bad feelings toward their fellow man.” I guess the Crusades could be listed that way, when they killed everybody. Then he brought out that, in the highest opposition against Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ always had love even for those who opposed Him.

Luke 22:50-51 [Jesus had been taken by the mob that came for Him, by the multitude, and they had Him imprisoned by their tight grip on Him] And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. But Jesus answered and said, “Permit even this.” And He touched his ear and healed him.

What He was really saying here was, would you please allow Me to heal him, let Me go for just a minute, and the mob let Him go, and Jesus Christ reached up and touched this man’s ear and it was healed. We know how head wounds bleed. I imagine blood was coming out of everywhere, Christ touched him and he was healed.

What do think went through that man’s mind? Here he was in this mob that was going to take this man to torture and kill Him. And he was screaming and shouting with the rest of them. And all of a sudden this Man reached up and replaced his ear. I often wondered, was that man called later? What happened when he got home? What did his friends think that were standing next to him about this act of selfless love? He set out to destroy Jesus Christ, yet He took time to heal him. We might want to think about that next time our anger comes up. We will talk about that later.

The disciples observed all that Christ did in serving others instead of Himself, teaching a way to the people for a full happy life. They saw the time when the widow woman was going down the funeral procession with her son in the coffin. Jesus looked in it and with a flash of an eye He knew what the problem was. She would now be alone and in that society that meant that she would probably starve to death because no one was to take care of her. Jesus stopped the procession and told the boy to get up. And the son rose, he stood on his feet, and entire crowd was stunned by the love He expressed and by what He did.

They saw Lazarus come out of the tomb. They saw Jesus Christ when they brought the woman who was caught in adultery and brought her to Him. They said they caught her in the very act, and Jesus wrote on the ground. He said, let the man who is without sin cast the first stone. He turned to her and said, "Is there anyone to condemn you here?" she said, "No, Lord," and He said, "Neither do I, just do not do it again."

This is the nonjudgmental Jesus Christ. He did not come to judge at that time but, He will judge. So the disciples saw all of this and every time they turned around they saw Him serving mankind. He healed twenty-four hours a day, He cast out demons. This was how Jesus Christ loved them. And this is how we are to love each other, with the same selfless serving way. Then came Jesus Christ's final act of love.

Luke 23:33-34 And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. The Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots.

Despite all the hatred, the callousness, the torture of those killing Him, Jesus did not seek revenge, but asked His Father to remit the penalty of their actions, and to pardon and forgive them.

Barnes' had a comment on this also. He said,

What we can learn from the prayer that Jesus Christ gave here is 1) the duty of praying for our enemies even when they are endeavoring to most injurious. 2) The thing for which we should pray for them is that God would pardon them and give them better minds. 3) We should learn that the power and excellence of the Christian religion, no other religion teaches men to pray for forgiveness of their enemies. No other disposes them to do it. [Men of the world seek revenge, we have that in Bosnia, North and South, the Arabs, the Jews, South Africa. We have hatred everywhere and nobody prays for their enemies.] 4) Pray that God would pardon them and save them from their sins. We can begin to

see this tremendous love that we are to have, 5) The greatest sin is the intercession through Jesus Christ might be saved.

What was the love of Jesus Christ had for His disciples then and for His disciples now? There are four words for love in the Greek only three are used in the New Testament. First is *philadelphia*. This indicates the love of family and friends, it could apply to being in the church as well, it could even apply to empirical self, my baseball team, my house, my property, my country. The word philanthropic comes from that, where they give donations and gifts to organizations that need money.

Phileo, it means the love of a friend. A somewhat narrowing of this concept of friendship. It is friendship with one who loves you and you return that love, this is the second type of love.

The one that is not mentioned in the Bible in the New Testament is *eros*. It describes physical love between husband and wife. And the above three steps do not require any special effort to exhibit. For most of us it is easy to love one's family that we have been raised in and nurtured in. It does not mean we do not have bumps and hurts in our life. They are family and we love them. And we have a close friend that no special effort is required to love our friend. He loves us and we return that love. And of course, the physical love is a natural physical emotion that men have for women, and women have for men, and that does not require a tremendous effort.

The love that God extends to us is a love that requires effort, and a mind preset to exhibit that love in all circumstances, even in unpleasant ones. This is the love that God requires of us.

In John 13, Christ said, "A new commandment I give to you." The word used there is *agapeo*. It means to esteem, to love, indicating a direction of the will; as referring to superior (our superior is Jesus Christ and God the Father); including an idea of duty through obedience to God; respect and veneration (meaning to love and serve with faithfulness); to regard others with favor and good will and benevolence; and the things you venerate and love. When it referred to the Pharisees, they respected and loved the uppermost seats. This is where their love was.

Revelation 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

They did not have respect for their own life, but they had respect for God and His laws. Therefore they were willing to lose their lives. The people willed their love and affection toward God and this of course would include all those in Hebrews 11.

Agape love is the love God has for us and for all of mankind. It is to love, have affection, regard, good will, and benevolence. With reference to God's love, it is God's willful direction toward man. It involves God doing what He knows is best for man, not necessarily what man wants done. God always approaches it from what is best, even in correction.

This is the type of love that we are to imitate. Were these examples of Jesus Christ just for that particular time? Are they for us today? Obviously, they are.

I Peter 2:19 For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.

Do we get wronged? Do we fight back in anger immediately, or correct the other person?

I Peter 2:20-23 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; . . .

He said He would leave the judgment and revenge in the situation in God the Father's hands. God the Father is sovereign.

I Peter 2:24-25 . . . who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sin, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

We were all going our own way, and now we are back, and we have to learn something new, a new way to live. We are to become like God the Father and Jesus Christ. The Bible says that God is love, God is patient, God is forgiveness, God is outgoing concern for others. This is how He wants us to be.

When an organization has been threatened with a danger that is common to all, the people tend to let down and begin to be concerned with self rather than concern for each other. In basic training when you first go into the Army, we were told that we had to watch our wallet because they would steal from us. They told us not to put the wallet under your pillow, mattress, or foot locker. So for the first three weeks I slept with my wallet in the crotch of my boxer shorts every night. Probably not the best place but nobody stole it! As we began to train together, we had to watch our belongings still because people would steal from the lockers. If someone was caught stealing, we would call it “barrack justice,” which was at the very least, a severe beating.

The true concern came when we went on line. The common danger brought a closeness that I had never experienced. I was amazed at the comradery, the love that each expressed for each other. Each man was truly a brother, and they came from backgrounds as varied as you will ever find—ex convicts, perverts. On line they were all part of the family, they were very concerned for each other. Then no longer was anyone worried that anyone would take their possessions, no one would dare touch anything.

Everyone stayed alert when on duty, because they realized that their performance could make or break the outfit. It could bring life or death, and that is the way we functioned. It was a beautiful thing to behold. When someone was injured, everybody came to see him, talked about him. It was a tremendous closeness.

As soon as we began to rotate home, all the comradeship, all the fellowship, all the closeness, began to disappear. Self-centeredness began to appear again, and the brotherly love that seemed so prevalent was no longer there, and everybody went his own self-centered way.

This church is in a time of relative quiet. The first three years we had a lot of conflict that brought a lot of us together. We had issues over the Sabbath, what Mr. Armstrong taught. They wanted to change doctrine. Those people, when the change did not come, they became offended. We had the new moons, postponements, tithing, government, and the whole nine yards. This last year we have had relative peace.

The thing that I am talking about today is that we want to make sure that we do not let down or become complacent in our respect and love for one another. This is not something that God wants us to do, because, needless to say, when this happens in the church there is someone waiting in the wings to pounce, and that is Satan the Devil.

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Satan is fully aware of our letting down. He will use this to wage war against us. Paul is saying we must stay close to God and be in His power and might to be able to stand against Satan.

Ephesians 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

I do not know if you have ever thought what the wiles of the devil are. The term is his modus operandi, that is, his motto. The term wiles is something that we should all come to understand. It means the method of the Devil, how he works, his traps, his art, his skill, his cunning. The term could properly rendered “his cunning devices,” his arts which he intends to delude and destroy us. The wiles of the Devil are various strategies which he employs to bring us down.

Most attacks are easier when they are frontal attacks, Satan does not do this. Satan is the captain of sneak attacks, he is the deceiver, a back alley attacker.

Satan does not normally carry out a frontal war against God's people. He sets us in situations in cunning ways to delude us, and in the area of personal relationships, that is gold mine for him.

I do not know how many of you have seen a big steel pry bar. They are about six feet long with a one end flattened and a sharp point on the other end. Every time I see these things taking place I think of Satan finding some little crack because of some personal thing that is taking place. An offense has taken place and Satan inserts this little flat part of the pry bar in the crack and he starts to pry and twist, and the event gets worse and worse, and grows larger and larger until tempers rage and anger springs forth, and words are spoken. Satan knows that we are supposed to have true love and he will bring us down if he can. Paul tells us here that we are fighting.

Ephesians 6:12-13 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Barnes has made this one sentence comment. He said, "Whenever we come into contact with evil, whether in our own heart or elsewhere, there we are to make war." We are to put it out, we are to attack it.

This is why we are to have the mind of God, this is why we are told to be perfect as our Father, because that is going to provide the armor that we need to stand.

James 4:7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. [Satan cannot stand those who have the mind of God.]

I Corinthians 12:28-31 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teacher, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all teachers? Are all workers of

miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

I Corinthians 13:1-4 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become as a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am as nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up.

He is basically saying; If I could speak to every man in his own language, a most valuable skill, and if I spoke with the tongues of angels, with perfect eloquence and persuasion, if I had the highest ability of speaking people would be awestruck by the messages that I give, but without the love of God it would be worthless.

Love is that vital principle, it is that without which other endowments are useless and vain. It does not matter how skilled you are, without love whatever your skill is does not mean a thing. Even if I sell all my estate and put it into small packages so that I could give it out to as many poor as possible, but if I really do not have the love of God, it does not mean a thing. If I do it for any selfish reasons it is all in vain. This is how important love is to God.

Does the obtaining of godly love require work and much effort? Yes! It requires that we become converted, and that is not an easy process. The kind of love we must have requires that we overcome our human nature. That is why it is so difficult.

I Corinthians 13:4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up.

Love suffers long. That means that love has a long mind to the end of which neither trials nor adversities, or persecutions, no provocations could reach.

The mind is patient with people, not giving to quick anger, patiently waiting, not losing faith, not giving up.

Love is kind. The action really means to be obliging. Love is willing to assist beneficially toward others, and be tender and compassionate, mild and gentle, even in trials.

Love does not brag or boast, or think highly of oneself. He does not elevate himself, because when one is elevated they tend to abuse others.

Love is not puffed up, it is not filled with pride and conceit of one's own importance. An individual who is filled with love is humble, and deeply thankful and appreciates the calling that he has been given. One who is godly knows that pride always breeds sin, and he fights against it. Love is not to cause anyone shame or disgrace, we should work to behave in a correct kind manner. The proper idea of the phrase here is to promote all that is fit and becoming in life, and to work to save others from all that is unfit and unbecoming.

Love does not seek its own. It does not satisfy its own desires; it is not foremost in the one who has love. It does not provoke others in indignation. One who has love is not prone to violent anger or exasperation. It is not hasty, but calm and serious. He thinks no evil, he thinks the best of others and he never supposes any good action has an evil intent behind it.

It does not rejoice in iniquity, he is not happy when someone stumbles, and thinks the best of a mistakes and wants the best for everyone. He rejoices in truth, honest truth without deception.

He bears all things to cover in silence, to conceal in love, hide faults. Love conceals in everything and anything that should be sealed and betrays no secret. A person who loves never makes the mistakes and faults and imperfections of another a public in conversation.

He believes all things, he has faith and trust and is ready to believe the best of every person, even those he does not like. He hopes all things. This means

to hope and expect with desire. Love expects good things when there is no place left for believing good in a person, then love comes in the form of hope that the individual will repent. This is the love of God, brethren.

Love endures all things to preserve, to sustain, to bear up under, love does not collapse when the going gets tough. No matter what the trial, love faces it with faith.

To put all of this in summary, God's love toward us is the love that is long suffering and patient, kind, not jealous in any way. Always humble, never acting rationally or puffed up, the love that does not want to bring anyone disgrace or rope them into wrong actions. A love that never thinks evil but sees the best in us. A love that never allows injustice to enter the mind, a love that loves truth and will do all possible to cover another's faults, a love that hopes that everyone will be in the Kingdom. It is a love that faithful, that never quits toward us no matter what trial or problem we face.

This is the love of God. This is the love that God has toward us and the love that we are to have toward each other. This is why this love requires a real conversion because we do not possess that kind of love naturally. We have to ask God to help us in prayer, and we must control ourselves.

Two weeks ago, my wife and I were up in Redding, California, and we were having dinner with Mary and Floyd Ingram. A conversation came around to the early days of our marriage. We discussed how sometimes it was difficult to follow the husbands when they were trying to lead. Husbands have to learn how to lead. I could tell by watching the Ingrams how much love and concern they had for each other. As we were eating dinner, I could not help but think that this is exactly what our calling is about here. We are learning in this time frame that we are called to be at one with God. We are learning to have the mind of God. At our resurrection God wants us to already have His mind to be thinking as He does.

At our resurrection we are to chiefly have the love of God. This is what God truly wants us to develop. This is what God wants us to have and it will be the basis for the Kingdom of God. God is love, the kingdom will be filled with love therefore, we must have the outgoing concern that God does.

Where should this love be exhibited? In the home, with the husband and wife and children first.

Ephesians 5:22-25 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.

The word submit means to yield. It also comes from a word that means to bring order in the home, where the wife has to learn to submit and the husband has to learn to love his wife. Both husband and wife should learn to love one another. When we are in our homes we are seen at the best and at the worst. We see each other on the Sabbath in our good-looking suits and dresses, and we put on our smiling faces, but what were we like all week long? When we have to live with somebody day in and day out it can be a strain. There is no question about that. It used to drive my wife nuts if I left the toilet seat up when we were first married, or not hanging up a wash rag, or not picking up the socks. She had to teach me a lot, but she had much outgoing concern for me so I came through that alright.

This is the time we have to learn; this is the time we have to put into practice the mind of God, the mind of love with each other in our homes, to have outgoing concern for our children, wives, and husbands.

In verse 21 it says, “submitting to one another in the fear of God.” We are to yield to each other to help the church to be a true family, because that is the second place that love should be applied. And third, in the world, as a light for others to wonder about. As you return kindness, respect, thoughtfulness for evil and disrespect, the world is going to wonder what is different about you. That is how we become a light.

God knew that with all His instructions to us, even with us trying to do what is right, there would still be disagreements in the church. He also knew that there would be the unexpected happen and He would allow that unexpected thing to happen to catch us off guard to teach us a lesson.

I can remember when I was in the Norwalk Worldwide Church of God. John Ritenbaugh was our pastor. I had been through leadership training, and I had been through the visiting program, and back at that time they did not always ask somebody if they wanted to be ordained. There was going to be a man ordained an elder, And I said, "It's me." I was no more ready to be an elder than to fly off the Empire State building, but in my young vanity days I thought they were talking about me. I kept being built up, but he ordained someone else. Not only was this person not me, but he had not been through leadership training, and he had not been through the visiting program, and how could God make that mistake! I did not know that I had a jealous bone in my body, but I turned bright green. I did all the appropriate things, I shook his hand and wished him well. But inside I was a garbage pile.

I went home and got on my knees and told God how sorry I was. I told Him I did not know I had a jealous bone in my body, but thanked Him for showing it to me. And I changed and I love that man very much.

We can be caught off guard, but God knows when we are caught off guard with other people in confrontation He has given us a procedure that straightens that out.

Matthew 18:15-17 "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector."

Leviticus 19:17 "You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord."

The admonition in Matthew 18:15 is for the one offended to go to the one who did the offending alone. We have a hard time with this. What He means by this is do not gossip about it in the church, do not build a case against him

with somebody else. Go to him alone and sit down and talk with him. The key in anything we do in the church, is to do it with true outgoing concern for others. If we are approaching someone whom we think has offended us, attitude is everything.

If we are filled with anger, jealousy, and a desire for revenge, it will not work. In that case it might be wise to take off two or three days to fast and pray about it, so that when you do approach the individual you will be doing it in a right attitude, with true concern for a right outcome. Then it will work and God will appreciate it.

Two friends of mine, Jack and Ted, Ted was an elder employed by the work, Jack was a deacon and close friend. Ted became very busy and he was ignoring Jack, and Jack said, "I've done something to offend him." It built and it built, until things were not being done civilly. Finally, Jack, who was a deacon, he was a converted man, finally got the courage to go to Ted, because it does take courage. The earlier you do it the better it is. When he finally went to him, he asked him what was wrong with their relationship? He answered, "Nothing, 'I've just been busy.'" To make a long story short, it ended up in bear hugs and a lot of tears. They remained great friends. But, you see, that not going tends to build up bitterness, wrath. Worst of all it builds up imaginations, which are usually all wrong.

How important is it to God that we do this?

Matthew 5:22-24 "But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And who ever says to his brother "Raca!" shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire." [Raca, means dummy, or senseless person. You fool, expressive of the highest guilt of the one who was an idolater.]

God knows anger precedes fighting, anger precedes killing, and in I John 3: 15 He says, "He who hates his brother is a murderer." You do not think God takes this seriously? He does! He said, if you cannot put it away the result may well be the Lake of Fire.

Matthew 5:23 “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

God is dead serious about this matter, He is saying that we must have a loving, right relationship with each other if we are going to worship Him.

There are times when we will meet somebody that you absolutely cannot stand, they have done something to you, they have offended you. What God wants you to do is get on your knees and ask God to give you love for the individual.

In Worldwide there was a young local elder and he had a bad family life, he did not like adults. He was put in charge of Y.O.U. and he had private meetings with the children. He told the children if they had any problems to come to him not with their parents. He went on a Y.O.U. outing, and our children were there. A group of children got into trouble, our daughter was involved with that trouble, there were no chaperons. He came and he restricted our daughter for six weeks. The restriction was good, but we were angry because this man did not have chaperons, he did not like parents. My wife got so upset. We were outside the house and I had to send her in the house because she was so mad. As soon as she left he turned to me and said, “Don’t hit me, I am an elder.” When he left, I went inside the house to pray, because of my anger. I got on my knees and I could not pray, the only thing I could pray about was my anger. For one solid week I asked God to help me love this man. This man left the church several years later and later I found out where he was living. I stopped in to see him, he said,” You’re the only person that has come to see me.”

That was God, John Reid did not do that. We can ask God to help us to love individuals. If you truly ask God for that and persist in doing what it says to do in I Corinthians 13, God will answer that request.

Deciding to love someone is a decision that is made on an individual basis and even if the other person does not love you, you can make the decision to

love them. Being disciples before all men is not easy because none of us has that kind of love as we should. This is the love we are to strive for.

As we have seen, obedience to God and outgoing concern for others is the very foundation of the Kingdom of God and this is the foundation that we must building if we are to welcomed into that Kingdom.

I thought about the Tlingit family whose son was developing his survivor skills alone in the wilderness, and I thought about how much they must have been concerned about him. As the day approached that he was about to be picked up how anxious they were to get him and welcome him back into the tribe as a man with a new stature, because he had completed what he went out to accomplish. I am sure his welcome was not a casual one. I am sure they had the biggest feast for him, and I am sure that his parents were just busting with pride that their son had stayed the course and had overcome.

I Thessalonians 4:16-17 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

That Day is coming when our Elder Brother is going to paddle for us and His welcome is going to be something special. It will be a wonderful welcome for us as well. There will be a huge elegant feast, because we overcame and stayed the course, and we gained the mind of God.

Ken Spenser and I were talking about what we will feel like when we change into a spirit being. I would feel that I am not really worthy. As we talked, I thought about our children when we would give them presents that were all wrapped up, and the children would sit down and open them. They tore the paper off as fast as they could, and their facial expressions were of great joy. You know, brethren, our Father wants to give us the gift of eternal life, and I am sure that He is looking forward to seeing the absolute joy on our faces when we stand there changed and to see what has been prepared for us. I do not think that we have the foggiest idea what God has in store for us. You see, we are not there yet.

What we have to do now is to learn to have the mind of God. God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ will continue to do all They can to bring us into the Kingdom, because of Their great love and desire They have for us to be part of the God Family. Our job is to do all that we can to honor Them by working diligently in true love and outgoing concern for each other. It is a tough job but God will give us His Spirit to get it done.