

of Love

perfect love casts out fear,
involves torment.
been made perfect in love.
4:18

he transgression of his lips,
come through trouble.
12:13

elps in our weaknesses.
should pray for as we ought,
s intercession for us with
cannot be uttered.
ches the hearts
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26-27

D makes one rich,
orrow with it.
10:22

re for a night,
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SECOND CHOICE



Choose to Express
Your Love for God

Love Who He Is Wholeheartedly

The second major decision you must make—after the first major decision to *receive* God's love—is to *love God*. Consistently. Without doubt. With everything that is in you. No fingers crossed. No dipping your toes in the shallow end but instead plunging full force into the deepest part of the ocean of God's affection for you.

When you understand who God is and how much He loves you—and you open your heart to receive His love—then you cannot help but grow in love for Him. It just happens.

The amazing thing is that the more your love for Him grows, the more you will forget about who you *think* you are and begin to understand who He *made* you to be. God wants you to love Him so much that you walk closely enough with Him to allow the knowledge of who *He really is* define who *you really are*.

Expressing our love for God involves more than just feeling it. More than just saying a thank-you to Him when you think of it. Nothing is wrong with either of those things, but there are also specific decisions we need to make regarding how we live and relate to God.

The Bible not only tells us how much God loves us and how far He has gone to assure us of His love, but it also tells us how we should express our love to *Him* in ways that please Him most.

Jesus instructed us to love Him with all of our being.

He said, "You shall love the LORD your God with *all your heart*, with *all your soul*, with *all your mind*, and with *all your strength*" (Mark 12:30).

That means wholeheartedly, with all that we have, by every means possible, with no holding back all because our inner jury is still out on our verdict about Him.

Jesus instructed us to love Him more than anyone or anything.

He said, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:37).

That doesn't mean we don't love our family members. It does mean we refuse to allow our love for anyone else to in any way diminish our love for God. In other words, we don't get so caught up with other people that we are too preoccupied to get caught up with *Him*. We seek His kingdom first, as He asks us to do, believing He will provide for those we love as well as for us because we are praying for them. This shows that we trust God to take care of them, knowing He loves them even more than we do.

Jesus instructed us to love Him more than wealth.

He said, "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money" (Matthew 6:24 NIV).

That means if we love money and possessions more than we love God, then we don't really love Him because we cannot do both. If our life is all about gaining wealth, then it's not all about serving

God. If it's about loving rich things of the Lord.

Wanting to make enough so you don't love God. But unbills actually comes from nothing you have. When you think that your possessions glorify God and not the love of money or anything else.

Falling in Love

We have to know God wholeheartedly. It requires great understanding of who He is and what He thinks about us.

It takes falling in love with God.

I was speaking at a conference one day, and I was talking about how I remember the way it was when I first felt it. Where they always were the object of their affection.

I described it to them this way:

When you fall in love, you give up your every thought on anything else. You love them with them, and you cannot live without them again. You are thrilled with them. What's not to love, right? You know about that person you are looking for clues as to who they are. You want to wrap your arms around them. And every time you see them, strength, fulfillment, joy.

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God. If it's about loving riches, then it's not about being rich in the things of the Lord.

Wanting to make enough money to pay your bills doesn't mean you don't love God. But understanding where the money to pay the bills actually comes from means you recognize the source of everything you have. When you submit all you have to God and intend that your possessions glorify Him, then you are led by the love of God and not the love of money. *He* is directing *you* and not anyone or anything else.

Falling in Love with Someone Special

We have to know God intimately in order to love Him wholeheartedly. It requires great understanding and knowledge of who He is and what He thinks about you.

It takes falling in love with Him.

I was speaking at a conference of women a week after Mother's Day, and I was talking about loving God. I asked the women to remember the way it was when they fell in love with someone. How it felt. Where they always wanted to be. How they acted around the object of their affection.

I described it to them this way. See if it sounds accurate to you.

When you fall in love, that special person you love occupies your every thought, so much so that it's hard to focus on anything else. You long for that person when you're not with them, and you cannot wait to be in their presence again. You are thrilled with everything you see about them. What's not to love, right? You want to know all there is to know about that person, so you often look lovingly at them for clues as to who they *are* and who they will *become*. You want to wrap your arms tightly around them and *never let go*. And every time you embrace that person, you feel *new* strength, fulfillment, joy, and life flowing into your *being*.

You have deeply connected to that person at a depth you have always dreamed about, and your heart has found a home.

As I was describing all of this, I realized that each phrase perfectly described how I felt about the Mother's Day gift I had received just the week before. When my son and daughter-in-law handed me a small package wrapped in pink with a pink bow on top, I was smitten. She was 6 pounds, 13 ounces, and the moment I saw her it was love at first sight. My first grandchild—my granddaughter—was only minutes old, and yet she had a way of bringing such joy and happiness into my heart that I knew she was someone I would love forever.

What's not to love?

Every word I had said to the women at the conference to describe the way it feels to fall in love perfectly described the way I felt about my granddaughter. And I knew that because she was in my life I would never be the same again.

I told my son and daughter-in-law they should never even think of getting another Mother's Day present for me again. This one gift will perfectly cover every Mother's Day from now on. Unless, of course, they were thinking of giving me something similar in the future. When I said that, their eyes glazed over, and they made the smallest attempt at a halfhearted smile. It had been too hard getting her here to think about that. But 15 months later they presented me with another small pink bundle, and the same thing happened—the joy, the happiness, and the life-changing love.

Feeling this kind of deep, committed love is a glorious way to feel. And that's the way God wants us to feel about *Him*. *All the time!*

Please read again the indented paragraph above that describes the way it feels to fall in love. Only this time, think of the words as how God wants *you* to feel about *Him*.

All the time!

Identifying

Jesus said, "Where you are, there is the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:21).

He isn't saying we can't enjoy what we have. He is saying we can't be satisfied and materialistic in what we own so that we are bound to what perishes, but we are bound to what is in heaven. Our heart should be bound with the One who is the Father.

We must identify God.

Jesus spoke to a crowd of people who were rich in this life but did not know God. He said to himself, "What will I do with my crops?" So he said, "I will build greater, and there I will live." I will say to my soul, "Son, I will take care of you; years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; those things be which you have stored up.

Jesus answered this question: "Do not store up treasure for himself, and do not be satisfied with what he has. He was speaking of people who were rich in this life but did not know God. When they die, they will have to use to them, but those who are rich in this life will have a reward in heaven."

Jesus talked to a rich young man who was keeping the commandments but was not following Jesus. Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then follow Me" (Matthew 19:21). The young man did not answer because he had great possessions.

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Identifying Your Greatest Treasure

Jesus said, "*Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*" (Matthew 6:21).

He isn't saying we can't have any earthly possessions or we can't enjoy what we have. He's saying we should not be selfishly motivated and materialistic regarding them. Our treasure should not be in what we own so that we are tied to that in a way that keeps us bound to what perishes, as opposed to building up eternal wealth in heaven. Our heart should not be with our possessions but instead with the One who is the source of all we have.

We must identify God in our heart as our greatest treasure.

Jesus spoke to a crowd of people about a wealthy fool who was rich in this life but did not lay up treasures in heaven. This man said to himself, "What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?" So he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" But God said to him, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?" (Luke 12:17-20).

Jesus answered this question by saying, "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21). He was speaking of people who were more concerned with possessions than with God. When they died, their possessions would be of no use to them, but those who used what they had to glorify God would have a reward in heaven for eternity.

Jesus talked to a rich young ruler who told Him he had kept all the commandments but now wondered what more he should do. Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Matthew 19:21). The rich ruler was saddened by that answer because he had great wealth and he wasn't about to give it up.

Although honestly acquired wealth is referred to in the Bible as part of God's blessing, how we handle it reveals our heart and attitude toward it. If we love God, our heart will not serve money but serve Him. That doesn't mean we can never have anything. It means we don't put our security in what we have. We put it in the Lord.

The important question: *Where is your greatest treasure?*

The answer to that: *It's where your heart is.*

We can't love God with our whole heart if our heart loves money, possessions, wealth, and riches more than it loves Him.

Ask God to show you where your heart is. The more you know of God, the more your heart will be with *Him*. And the evidence of your great love for Him will be that He is your greatest treasure.

We have to make room in our life for what matters most. When we find our greatest treasure and identify it as such, everything else pales in comparison.

Once I knew I was going to have a granddaughter, I took my daughter's old room (she is married now) and made it into a baby's room. When you love someone, you make room in your life for that special person. You do what it takes to please them and show them you value and care about them, and that they are not a burden. In fact, you find you have energy and time for your special person you didn't think you had before you realized who it is you truly love.

God wants you to make room in your life for *Him*. He wants you to express your love to Him in every way that pleases Him. He will give you energy and time you didn't know you could have. And not only that, He will help you show your love for Him in ways that not only please Him but will also be for your greatest blessing.

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Prayer of Love

LORD, I love who You are and all You have done for me. I love all Your promises to me, and everything You have planned for my future. I am eternally grateful to be an heir of Your kingdom that You have given to those who love You (James 2:5). But even more than all of that, I simply want to love You with all my *heart, soul, mind, and strength* just as You desire (Mark 12:30). Help me to love You with my entire being, without compromise. Teach me how to accomplish all this in every way that is pleasing to You.

I don't want to be like the Pharisees who tried to do everything perfectly—and legalistically—but bypassed the part about loving You (Luke 11:42). I know You see who has true love for You in their heart and who does not (John 5:42). I don't ever want You to see me offer lukewarm or halfhearted love where You are concerned. I want to be able to show my adoration and consistently express my love for You in the most heartfelt ways.

Lord, Your Word says that if anyone loves You, that person is known by You (1 Corinthians 8:3). I want to be known by You in great depth, and to know You deeply as well. Help me to be "rooted and grounded in love" so that everything I do reflects my love for You (Ephesians 3:17). Thank You that You loved me long before I ever knew to love You (1 John 4:19). Now I love everything about You. Enable me to walk more closely to You every day so that I can know You more.

In Jesus' name I pray.

Words of Love

The LORD does not see as man sees;
for man looks at the outward appearance,
but the LORD looks at the heart.

1 SAMUEL 16:7

We have known and believed the love that God has for us.
God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God,
and God in him.

1 JOHN 4:16

Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God
has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit
who was given to us.

ROMANS 5:5

We love Him because He first loved us.

1 JOHN 4:19

He who does not love does not know God,
for God is love.

1 JOHN 4:8

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We leave *Him*.

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Live His Way Uncompromisingly

Time and again in the Old Testament, God's people—the Israelites—suffered because they did not love God enough to do what He told them to do. They lost sight of how to live His way. That's because they did not wholeheartedly love God, so they did not seek His presence. They refused to avoid the things that would compromise their relationship with Him, and they allowed themselves to become separate from Him.

The same is true for us today. We don't become separate from God unless we *choose* to be.

He never leaves us.

We leave Him.

We do that by living in disobedience to His ways. Our disregard for His laws puts up a barrier between us and Him until we can no longer hear Him speaking to our heart. And He won't listen to our prayers until we return to Him and take down the barrier. "The LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But *your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear*" (Isaiah 59:1-2).

It's not that He cannot hear; it's that He *will not* hear.

God does not refuse to listen to our prayers because He no longer loves us. It's because He *does* love us. If we want our prayers answered, we must get sin out of our lives and repent of it. That's the way it is.

Sin is demonic in its origin. The enemy comes to destroy us by leading us in opposition to God's ways. In fact, rebellion crouches at the door of our heart and waits for us to fall into deception so separation from God can creep in on us. It's subtle at first.

Sin often begins as a mere seed of a thought in the mind that is a lie from the enemy of our soul. It's designed to destroy us. As that thought is entertained by our desires, it grows until it guides our actions.

Too often we hear about a married Christian leader who has an affair outside of marriage. Surely that person chose their profession because they felt called by God and wanted to serve Him, so where did it all go wrong? At some point they allowed a thought into their mind that found a place to dwell in their heart until it became an action. And because of the distance all sin puts between a person and God, the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit to their heart could no longer be heard. Or if it was, there wasn't enough love for God in their heart to heed it, so it was ignored.

This can happen to anyone when they are blinded by pride to the point they think their needs are above God's laws. They don't love God above all else. Or they sort of love Him—but not enough.

The Bible says our sins testify *against us* until we confess them before God.

We separate *ourselves* from God because of our sins, and when we lie to ourselves about it, we are also lying to the Lord. We talk ourselves into believing a lie, such as "What I am doing is not that bad." "I deserve this." "This isn't hurting anyone." "No one will ever know." It all starts with a thought that is not born out of love for God and His ways and ends up with a heart that doesn't recognize who God really is.

The way to stop all this
His Word every bit as much

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The way to stop all this from happening is to love God and love His Word every bit as much.

Remember, Jesus is the living Word.

I have heard people say they can relate to Jesus but not to God. Or to God but not to the Holy Spirit. Whichever it is, that thinking is not right because God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are one. They are inseparable. We don't divide them up and choose sides. They are the three persons of the one true God. When we don't really get that, then we can't receive the fullness of *God's love* for us because we don't understand all that God is and all that He does. Nor can we fully show *our love* for God.

Because of my past I was not taught much about the Word of God. In fact, I never heard that term until I was an adult. And I didn't receive much instruction about life, either. So I had to learn many things the hard way.

I observed good, godly traits and habits in my dad. For example, he was kind and not mean, in stark contrast to my mother. He worked hard to support the family in spite of one hardship after another. In one year alone a record blizzard killed his cattle in the winter and a record hailstorm destroyed his crops in the spring, and we were forced to leave our home, but I never heard him complain. He never used foul language. He was not a raging alcoholic or drug user. He was not a womanizer, nor did he ever stray from his home. He taught me good things by his example.

My mother, on the other hand, was irrational and unpredictably violent. During her crazy episodes she used language so foul I have never heard anything as bad to this day. Usually it was directed at me. Today I understand that this was part of her mental illnesses, but not back then. I just thought it was somehow my fault—that my existence provoked her to such extremes. And maybe it did.

We never went to church as a family that I remember. My father avoided it in the same way one would avoid a highly contagious and deadly disease. He told me that once he left his parents' home he

vowed he would never enter another church as long as he lived. As far as I know he didn't.

There was a large Bible in our house that, to my knowledge, had not been opened for years. When I was about fourteen, we moved to another town and my mother tried harder to be normal. It was as though she was attempting to make a new start. She and I attended a little Episcopal church where we even sang in the choir. I saw her open up that Bible a few times and read it, although I was never tempted to do that myself. It bordered on a semi-positive experience until the day she stormed into the living room, opened up the back door, and threw the Bible out in the dirt in the backyard. And that was the end of the Bible and the church. She could only keep it together for so long before she became mad at God. Then she descended back into her dark and violent world. Sadly, she never knew the love and power of God that can heal and transform. That's what happens when the Holy Spirit is totally left out of the equation and God is misunderstood.

Aside from that brief experience, I never actually learned what the Bible said. Had I been instructed specifically in the ways of God, I could have avoided the horrible mistakes I made. Although much can be learned by both observation and experience, having even the most basic foundation in God's Word would have made all the difference in my being able to never suffer the consequences of the foolish and dangerous things I did.

There are so many important things we will never learn anywhere else except from God's Word. That's because every time we read or hear God's Word with an open heart and spiritually opened eyes, a transformative dynamic happens in the process.

The truth is, we become slaves to whomever we obey. We can either become a slave to our own sin or a slave to the Lord and His ways. If we don't know the Lord's ways, what is the end result?

Some people mistakenly believe they are "free" and therefore not restricted by God's rules and laws, but they are actually enslaved by their own greed, lust, obsessions, indulgence, self-focus, bitterness,

unforgiveness, bad habits, and so on. They are not living by God's will for them. The Bible says, "For as many as have received the Lord Jesus Christ have forgiveness of sins" (Romans 6:17-18).

Our love for God—and our obedience to Him—establishes our foundation in Christ. It is His righteousness.

That is *true freedom*.

Show Love for

Reading the Bible is like a journey. It is described in the first chapter of the Bible. The reading of God's Word exposes our hearts. We seek God in His Word, and we become more like *Him*. Every time we read the Bible, it only reveals more of who *He* is. It shows us who *we are*. He then grows us to resemble Him.

If we live according to His Word, we will have His obedience. "*The LORD rewards those who love His Word, according to the cleanness of their ways.*" For I *have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not departed from my God*" (Psalm 18:20-21).

Jesus made it clear that living by His Word is the way to life.

He said, "*He who has My commandments and who loves Me. And he who loves Me will love him and manifest My love. He who does not love Me will keep My word; and My Father will not love him, nor will I love him, nor will he come to him and make Our home with him.*"

There is a clear connection between the Word and God's presence in our lives. The Holy Spirit will make their home in us if we love for God by keeping His commands.

It can't get any clearer than this.

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unforgiveness, bad habits, apathy, anger, or whatever else is not God's will for them. The Bible says we "*were slaves of sin*," but when we received the Lord we were set free to become "*slaves of righteousness*" (Romans 6:17-18).

Our love for God—and expression of that love to Him—estab-lishes our foundation in Christ and allows us to become slaves to His righteousness.

That is *true freedom*.

Show Love for God by Living His Way

Reading the Bible is like looking into the magnifying mirror I described in the first chapter. That is exactly the way an in-depth reading of God's Word exposes the imperfections in us. The more we seek God in His Word, the more He shows us where we need to become more like *Him*. Every time we look into His Word, He not only reveals more of who *He is*, but He also shows us more of who *we are*. He then grows us to reflect His nature and character.

If we live according to His Word, we gain His favor because of our obedience. "*The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God*" (Psalm 18:20-21).

Jesus made it clear that living His way demonstrates our love for Him.

He said, "*He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him... If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him*" (John 14:21,23).

There is a clear connection between our obedience to God's Word and God's presence in our lives. God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will make their home with us when we show our love for God by keeping His commandments.

It can't get any clearer than that.

We read the Bible not just for information but for revelation from God. Every time we read His Word we can sense His presence. And when we become familiar with God's voice speaking to us from His Word, we will then be able to recognize His voice speaking to our heart when we are *not* reading His Word at that moment.

John, one of the apostles, said, "*This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.* And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3).

His commandments are not too hard because He *helps* us to obey them when we ask Him to.

Show Love for God by Asking Him to Help You *Do* His Word

Another great thing God does for us is that He not only gives us His guide to a *good* life—His commandments, rules, precepts, and laws—but He also *helps* us to obey each life-saving law.

God enables us to live His way when we ask Him to do so.

He knows our weaknesses and that we end up doing things we don't want to do because of them. But when we make it our *desire* and *delight* to do His Word, it pleases Him because it demonstrates our love for Him.

"*Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror, for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was*" (James 1:22-24).

There is that mirror illustration again.

If we only hear the Word and don't *do* it, we not only cannot see our true selves reflected clearly, we don't really understand who God made us to be. But if we look "*into the perfect law of liberty*" and are "*not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work*" we will be blessed in all we do (James 1:25).

That means we can forget who we are when we just hear or read God's laws. It's in the *doing* of them that our knowledge of God's Word takes root and we come to understand who He created us to be.

God's laws ignite our conflict between our new nature and the flesh wants to do what it wants. God.

Jesus questioned why people thought what He asked them to do was the right to call Him Lord. A rebellion against His laws means loss of His grace in our heart and life.

We show love for God by obeying Him and also by recognizing we need His help to do so.

Paul warns that we can't rely on the power of God giving us strength to do the right thing. Paul says, "*Be sober, be vigilant, because the devil is like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, lest he fall. No temptation has overcome you from without, but God is faithful, who will keep you from being tempted beyond what you are able to bear. He will also make the way of escape for you, that you will not be tempted, but you will be able to endure the trial*" (1 Corinthians 10:12-13).

We can choose to obey, but we need God's help that enables us to do it. We must not resist anything.

Show Love for God Your C

I have often cited King David. He was a real and fallible human being who loved God and wanted to do right, but he often failed. God's way and experienced new things. Other people in the Bible like Peter, Paul, and others had their feelings and experiences as much as David did. When he was in the wilderness, his deeply heartfelt—often gut wrenching—prayers were heard by God.

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God's laws ignite our conscience. We have a battle going on between our new nature and our old nature (Romans 7:19-25). Our flesh wants to do what it wants even though our mind wants to obey God.

Jesus questioned why people called Him "Lord" and didn't do what He asked them to do (Luke 6:46). We obviously don't have the right to call Him Lord if we are not living *His* way. Our rebellion against His laws means He doesn't really have the place of prominence in our heart and life.

We show love for God by refusing to live in disobedience to Him and also by recognizing we *can't* live His way without Him *helping* us to do so.

Paul warns that we can't resist lust and idolatry without the power of God giving us strength. When we ask Him, He will enable us to do the right thing. Paul said, "*Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*" No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but *with the temptation will also make the way of escape*, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:12-13).

We can choose to obey, but it is the power of the Holy Spirit in us that enables us to do it. With His power working in us, we can resist anything.

Show Love for God by Refusing to Create Your Own Suffering

I have often cited King David's life examples in this book because he was a real and fallible human being who had a loving heart toward God and wanted to do right, but he fell into temptation to not live God's way and experienced needless suffering because of it. There are other people in the Bible like that as well, but they didn't write about their feelings and experiences in clear, deep, and relatable ways as much as David did. When he repented of what he had done, it was deeply heartfelt—often gut wrenchingly so—and God forgave him.

He was a lot like we are. We bring needless suffering upon ourselves too.

While we may have never done anything as bad as David, we certainly have had need for repentance in our lives.

David recognized that his suffering was because of his own disobedience and he was drowning in the consequences. *"My iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds are foul and festering because of my foolishness. I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long"* (Psalm 38:4-6). *"My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart fails me"* (Psalm 40:12).

A burden too heavy to bear, festering wounds, sorrow, guilt, mourning, and heart failure, all because of unconfessed sin? It's not worth it. Let's repent as soon as possible. Let's ask God to etch His law in our heart like a tattoo so we don't ever leave home without it.

David often thought God didn't see or hear him anymore because of his failure to live God's way. But God *did* hear David's prayers because of his repentant heart. "I said in my haste, 'I am cut off from before Your eyes'; nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried out to You" (Psalm 31:22).

God loves us enough to allow us to go through the fire when He wants to purify us. He allows us to go through floodwaters, which cleanse us. He lets us suffer when it will mold our heart for His kingdom. "You, O God, have tested us; You have refined us as silver is refined... *we went through fire and through water; but You brought us out to rich fulfillment*" (Psalm 66:10,12).

How many times have we, too, said, "God doesn't hear my prayers. He doesn't see my need"? The truth is that He *does* hear and He *does* see, but sometimes we have unconfessed and unrepented sin, such as doubt, unforgiveness, unresolved anger, lying... the list is endless. We have to ask Him to show us.

Sometimes it's not a sin problem. It's just that God wants us to

wait on Him in faith to ask Him in those times. Waiting on us to do something. Waiting on us to do something? Waiting on us to do something and obedience?

David asked who could answer his own question by saying *truthfulness*, and *speaks the truth*. You are always speaking the heart from becoming de-

Scripture says that God is to guide us with His love to Him.

That means we have to

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Because we cannot always reveal them to us. "When I have secret faults" (Psalm 19:12). There is nothing in our lives that God is most important ways we keep from doing something.

We love God too much.

We show love for God with our heart that should not be hidden and know my heart; try me, and is any wicked way in me, and 139:23-24).

God showed David what his trouble was that too often he did. He should have been watching the woman next

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 ask Him in those times if He is perhaps waiting on *us* for some-
 thing. Waiting on us to obey Him? Waiting on us to hear His lead-
 ing? Waiting on us to lay down our idols? Or is He testing our faith
 and obedience?

David asked who could dwell with God and then answered his
 own question by saying, "He who *walks uprightly*, and *works righ-*
teousness, and *speaks the truth in his heart*" (Psalm 15:2). Ask God if
 you are always speaking truth in your heart. The way to keep your
 heart from becoming deceitful is to wash it daily in the Word.

Scripture says that God guides us with His eye (Psalm 32:8). If
 He is to guide us with His eye, that means we have to be looking
 to Him.

That means we have to be looking into His Word as well.

Show Love for God by Asking Him to Reveal What Is in Your Heart

Because we cannot always see our own sins, we need to ask God
 to reveal them to us. "*Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from*
secret faults" (Psalm 19:12). God hates sin and we don't want some-
 thing in our lives that God hates. Getting rid of sin is one of the
 most important ways we show our love for Him. That's the way we
 keep from doing something we are tempted to do.

We love God too much to allow it to happen.

We show love for God by asking him to show us anything in
 our heart that should not be there. David said, "*Search me, O God,*
and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; *and see if there*
is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm
 139:23-24).

God showed David what was in his heart just as he asked. The
 trouble was that too often David should have asked much sooner
 than he did. He should have asked the night he was up on his roof
 watching the woman next door take a bath. Actually, he shouldn't

have been there that night in the first place. He was supposed to be out on the battlefield with his soldiers at war.

When God revealed what was in David's heart, he repented and God forgave him. But he should have done so sooner.

We can also ask God to reveal what is in our heart as we read His Word. And we can ask Him to help us be free of whatever is not of Him.

Jesus said, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And *you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:31-32).

This doesn't mean we are set free by just *any* truth. We can know the truth about a lot of things and never get free of anything. Only knowing *God's* truth truly sets us free.

In order to be set free by God's truth, His Word must be planted in our heart. God's Word says to "*receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls*" (James 1:21). If we water, nourish, and cherish the implanted Word, it will grow into great strength, wisdom, courage, and a sense of what's right.

Jesus also said, "*If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love*, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:10-11).

Jesus proved His love for us by going to the cross to pay the consequences for our sins. "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). We need to prove our love for Him by going to the foot of the cross and asking Him to expose our heart and set us free of anything that keeps us from living in the fullness of His joy.

No greater love, indeed.

Show Love for God by Letting His Word Change You

When you love God's Word, it *changes you* every time you read it. You can be anxious about something, but when you read the

Scriptures, you will feel God's love. *you sense God's love, the more you read, the more it changes you.*

Make time every day to be close to God. Let His Word speak to you as you read it. Test it and not in opposition to it. Refuse to let anything be questionable.

You will find yourself growing as you grow in His Word.

Without having your roots in the truth, you will just be learning about it, but in order to be changed, you must be in it. It is possible to have knowledge of the truth, but not to be changed by it. But that's not growing. You must be *formed* and *not* just *informed*.

The Bible says we shall bear fruit. We can declare that the Lord is good and that we stand. "Those who are planted in the Word will flourish in the courts of our God. *they shall be fresh and flourishing*"

The only way we bear fruit is by letting His Word are planted in our heart now. Don't let anything be too big. Ask God to remove anything that might hinder you. Allow those seeds to grow. Tell God that you love Him in Your commandments, which I have given you.

Then act accordingly.

Scriptures, you will feel God's love taking away your fears. *The more you sense God's love, the more your love for Him grows, and the more that changes you.*

Make time every day to be changed by God's Word. Ask Him to speak to you as you read it. Tell Him you choose to live His way and not in opposition to it. Refuse to be a part of anything that is questionable.

You will find yourself growing in the Lord to the same degree that you grow in His Word.

Without having your roots in *God's truth*, you will not mature in truth. You will just be learning facts. There is nothing wrong with that, but in order to be changed you have to receive more. It is possible to have knowledge of God's Word and not be touched or changed by it. But that's not good enough. You want to be *transformed* and not just *informed*.

The Bible says we shall bear fruit and flourish into old age so we can declare that the Lord is good and He is our foundation on which we stand. "Those who are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. *They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing*" (Psalm 92:13-14).

The only way we bear fruit into old age is if seeds from God's Word are planted in our heart now so they can grow into something big. Ask God to remove anything from your heart that would not allow those seeds to grow. Tell God every day, "I will delight myself in Your commandments, which I love" (Psalm 119:47).

Then act accordingly.

Word Change You

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Prayer of Love

LORD, I pray You would help me to live Your way without compromise. Teach me Your laws and commands so they are etched upon my heart. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). Guide me every day in the way I should go. Your laws are good and more desirable than fine gold, and You have a great reward for those who keep them (Psalm 19:9-11). Thank You that because I love Your ways, You have anointed me "with the oil of gladness" (Psalm 45:7).

I love Your laws because I know they are right and they keep me from stumbling, and all who keep them have great peace (Psalm 119:165). I know that "all Your commandments are truth" and they have been true and unfailing forever (Psalm 119:151). "I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure" (Psalm 119:162). Help me to always feel that way. Make my faith to grow as I read and hear Your Word (Romans 10:17).

I love Your ways and despise the ways of those who don't. "Rivers of water run down from my eyes, because men do not keep Your law" (Psalm 119:136). It grieves me to see people disregard Your laws. I know it grieves You even more when I do the same. You see my "secret sins" (Psalm 90:8), so I ask You to expose them if I am allowing something into my mind and heart that should not be there. I will confess it before You so that I can be forgiven and remove any separation between You and me. "You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your word" (Psalm 119:114).

In Jesus' name I pray.

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You are my hiding place and
(Psalm 119:114).

Words of Love

Great peace have those who love Your law,
and nothing causes them to stumble.

PSALM 119:165

Do not forget my law,
but let your heart keep my commands;
for length of days and long life
and peace they will add to you.

PROVERBS 3:1-2

I have restrained my feet from every evil way,
that I may keep Your word.

PSALM 119:101

Give me understanding,
that I may learn Your commandments.
Those who fear You will be glad when they see me,
because I have hoped in Your word.

PSALM 119:73-74

Unless Your law had been my delight,
I would then have perished in my affliction.
I will never forget Your precepts, for by them You have
given me life.

PSALM 119:92-93

Learn to Worship Him Lavishly

One of the most powerful ways to express our love for God is by worshipping Him. It's the purest form of adoration because we are focused completely on Him and not on ourselves.

The Bible says, "Let everything that has breath praise the LORD" (Psalm 150:6). As long as we are still breathing on this earth, we should "praise Him for His mighty acts" and "according to His excellent greatness" (Psalm 150:2). In other words, praise Him *for what He has done* and *for who He is*.

God is not asking us to worship Him because He has an ego that needs to be stroked. It's because He wants us to honor Him with the reverence that is due Him. Plus, in the expressing of our love, adoration, and reverence for Him, He opens up a channel through which we connect with Him and become the closest to Him we can ever be on this earth.

Showing Love for God in Worship Changes You

We all worship something whether we realize it or not. Some people worship money, possessions, themselves, their animals, or their

political party. Others make idols out of their work, their children, their talent, their friends, the sun, the moon, the ocean, a sport, an occupation, nature, beauty, music, celebrities, hobbies, or entertainment. The list is endless. Whatever it is, it's an attempt to fulfill the human need to worship something or someone.

Whatever we worship will be the biggest motivator of all we do and have the greatest influence on our lives.

The truth is, there is only One who is worthy of our worship, and if we don't understand that, we will miss out on great blessings we can never receive any other way.

We were born to worship God. It's the way He shares Himself with us. As we worship Him, He pours Himself into us—His love, power, joy, peace, and wisdom—and in the process He transforms us into who we were created to be. We become like what we worship, so the more we worship God, the more we become like Him (Psalm 115:4-8). And we cannot become all we were created to be without that happening.

One of the most amazing things about God is that even though our worship and praise are directed solely at Him, we are the ones who benefit. Isn't it just like our loving God to make something that is totally about Him to be the key to our greatest blessing?

Expressing our love for God in worship and praise fulfills us in ways we didn't realize we could be filled—in ways we didn't even know we were empty. That's because He wants to give us certain blessings that can only happen when we are praising Him. Every time we worship Him, something changes in us—in our mind, emotions, attitudes, desires, or goals.

The more you understand who God is, the more you will love Him. The closer you walk with Him, the more you will worship Him and be changed by Him.

Praise God No Matter What Is Happening in Your Life

God's kingdom is invited into our lives in a powerful way every time we lift up praise and worship to Him. Our worship

demonstrates our love for Him powerfully in our lives to transform. That's why it's God's will that *every situation*. When we don't do great things God wants to do, we reverse something that is headed

There have been countless times I prayed and prayed about a particular situation arising. But there came a time when I was to continue praising Him. I was to trust that He had the power to change things that were perfect. I took that stance, and finally came.

Worship establishes an atmosphere. Things happened that I had never experienced. A powerful dynamic.

God requires worship and because He wants us to be so. And He does that because He has the power to do in our lives, and He must be able to give us what we will receive.

"Let the peoples praise You, O Lord. Then the earth shall yield her increase to You. God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear You." (Psalm 67:5-7). Blessings happen.

What parent doesn't want their children to have appreciation for them without making them feel like they're not doing too. That's why we need to make something we may or may not have in our way of life.

We were created to worship