

a publication of Life Action Ministries

revive

Volume 47, Issue 1

LOVE
ONE

MORE



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A photograph of a forest fire with thick smoke rising from the trees. The number 06 is overlaid in large white font.

FOREST FIRE

Our culture is being consumed by flames. Our families are being ravaged on a bonfire of selfishness and faithlessness. How can we hope to recover what we've lost?

A close-up photograph of an elderly man with a beard, looking down thoughtfully. The number 10 is overlaid in large white font.

IN TRAINING TO LOVE

Loving my neighbor is one thing. Loving my neighbor *as myself* is quite another story. How do we go about learning how to love like Jesus loves?

A photograph of a man standing next to a red truck in a cluttered outdoor area. The number 14 is overlaid in large white font.

SPIRITUAL AWAKENING BRINGS SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION

Whatever God's reviving Spirit does in us and among us to fix our eyes on Jesus, the Spirit also does *for the blessing of other people*.

A photograph of a white teacup on a saucer with a spoon, set against a blurred background. The number 18 is overlaid in large white font.

A LOVE SUPPLIED BY FAITH

What is the link between God's great love for us and our ability to love others? How do we work out what He has worked in us?

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REVIVED HEART, FRESH LOVE

► When God's love changes a life, that love overflows onto others around them. Life Action sees this happen in church after church across the country, and I've seen it happen in my own neighborhood.



SPIRIT OF REVIVAL

Byron Paulus
Executive Director

***Imagine the
impact we'd see
if every believer
in Jesus simply
loved one more!***

 @ByronPaulus

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Byron'.

Meet Marge. I received a letter from her in April, exactly six months after one of Life Action's ministry teams was at her church. With a heart overflowing with gratitude and praise to God, she wrote:

My life has changed dramatically, and so have many others. Many of us came alive and went back to the Lord's work. My joy was restored, and I am now serving the Lord with all that I am, wherever He wants me. With many others, I will be going on a mission trip to Hong Kong. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever see myself as a volunteer for a mission trip anywhere.

Some background: I came to Christ in my 30s. My life changed then, but not like it has now. I still held the ball in my own court, tossing it to Jesus once in a while. I still had not surrendered to Him. Then came Life Action 21 years later into my life.

First, I quit smoking, after 43 years. I used no manmade helps. The power of prayer worked. Second, my son was saved. I cannot tell you the joy I felt, after 19 years of prayer and tears, to see the answer come. Not only that, but God allowed me to be the one that prayed with him and led him to Jesus. Third, there was an extended impact in my family that is difficult to fully describe: my mother, brother-in-law, niece, daughter's fiancé, daughter's friend, and others in my family circle were saved! On top of this, my nephew and his wife rededicated their lives to the Lord.

One changed life had an effect on all these and will now reach more and more. To God be the glory.

The results of revived life in Christ were crystal clear in Marge's life. She shared the love

of Jesus, her life demonstrated what that kind of love looks like, and her impact grew! Soon, she would spread that love to people on the other side of the globe.

Meet Barbara. In 1987 her husband was killed on a Navy ship, the *U.S.S. Stark*, by a missile launched from an Iraqi jet. She took her ten-year-old son and her \$1 million settlement and moved to the Middle East to share Jesus with those who killed her husband. She has continued in that capacity ever since.

There is only one reason that Marge, Barbara, and thousands of others like them are joyfully sharing the love of Jesus, even laying down their lives to serve others. They had an encounter with Jesus themselves, and their acts of selfless love are really an overflow of the love He has poured into their hearts.

That's the vision cast in this issue of *Revive*: that revived hearts, full of God's love, would begin looking out at the world around them for more people to love. *Imagine the impact we'd see if every believer in Jesus simply loved one more!*

Meet Ollie. On a personal note, and substantially less dramatic, seven years ago I reached a point of fresh surrender to God. As a result, my wife and I started asking how we could really love our neighbors. Since then, I have been blessed to mow my elderly neighbor's lawn. Last week, while I was out of town, Ollie was taken to the emergency room with what First Responders thought was a life-threatening stroke. When my wife raced to see him, Ollie grabbed her hand and would not let go. In a small way, the love of Jesus has been overflowing from my house into his.

I hope we can keep loving Ollie, and one more after him.

"The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Timothy 1:5 NASB).



Innovative team-led events designed to encourage your entire church family toward **TRANSFORMATION AND MISSION**



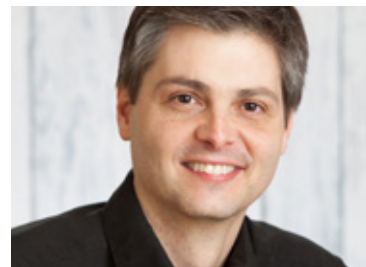
Spiritual renewal begins when we seek God with humility, repentance, and reverence. That leads us to fresh joy in obedience to Christ, for God's glory. Our innovative, team-led events are designed to encourage every member of your church family toward transformation and mission.

Call 269-697-2122 to schedule your Life Action event.
Visit LifeAction.org/events to learn more.

Life Action events typically schedule one year in advance, in churches with a weekly attendance of 500 or more.

HOW BIG IS YOUR FAMILY?

► The breakdown of the family has left a hole in the heart of a generation longing to be re-parented. Is there room at your dining room table for one more?



CONVERSATIONS

Del Fehsenfeld III
Senior Editor

A family with an extra seat at the table is like a magnet.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Del'.

Thousands of teenagers responded ecstatically to the music as the most popular Christian band shook the house. By the time they finished, the atmosphere in the building was electric.

As the speaker walked out onto the stage, he knew he had less than a minute to grab their attention. He proceeded directly into the audience. Looking at a young man with tattoos and pierced eyelids, he said, “I wish you were my son.” And then to a young woman, “I wish you were my daughter.”

“Tonight, I want to speak to you like you were my own children.” You could hear a pin drop in the vast auditorium. And then the tears began to flow down the cheeks of many.

Josh McDowell, the speaker that evening, later commented to a gathering of Christian leaders on the power of that moment: “The greatest platform for communicating the gospel in the future will simply be an intact family.” The breakdown of the family has left a hole in the heart of a generation longing to be re-parented.

Several years ago, my wife and I stumbled into a related adventure. A young Christian college student was given my name for counsel. Haltingly, he told me of his experience with the emergence of same-sex attraction. He longed to marry and have children—to live a “normal life”—but felt incapable of committing to marriage with a woman because of his same-sex urges. Now his haunting fear was that fidelity to Jesus and obedience to Scripture would mean forever being alone.

I had no magic solution for his situation. I did tell him that, regardless, isolation didn’t have to be the outcome of his life. I assured him that Jesus came to create a new kind of human family defined not by blood but by the Spirit. *Married or celibate, he could belong to the Jesus family.*

Over the next months, this student progressively became part of my family. And then he

started introducing us to his student friends. More and more of them started showing up for meals and staying late into the night for conversation and prayer. I found myself regularly stepping over sleeping bodies strewn across my living room in the morning on my way to work.

Over the next eighteen months, many students came to our home. Some brought their friends, parents, and siblings. We keep asking, “Why?” They keep telling us, “We’ve never been a part of anything like this before . . . it’s like a different kind of family, where we all actually belong.”

Here are a few things we’ve learned so far:

1. It’s great to have a *close* family, but not a *closed* family. Most families are closed (organized to benefit the members), but Jesus families need to be open (organized to include and bless others). This is obvious from the gospel but somehow missed by many of us. *Why is that?*
2. Many young people, at least in my culture, have never been a part of an intact family, let alone a Jesus family. They are desperate for belonging and looking for purpose. *When will Christian families start providing that?*
3. A family with an extra seat at the table is like a magnet. *Do you have a seat open at yours?*
4. Every family needs a purpose bigger than itself to thrive. It’s impossible to follow Jesus and disciple children if the focus is still on our own happiness, as if our families are an end in themselves.

So let me ask you one question: *How big is your family?*

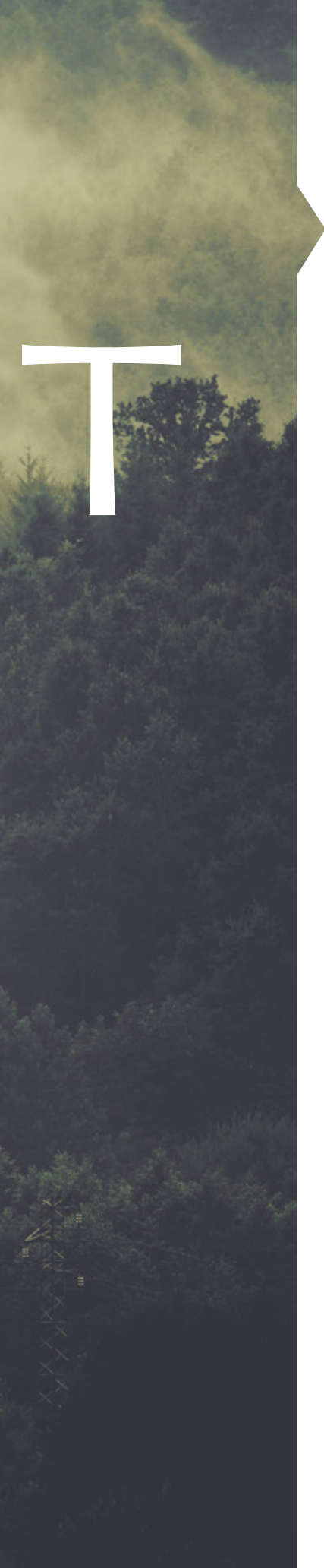
FOREST FIRES

BY DAN JARVIS



Imagine standing on a mountaintop and looking over a vast, forested valley. Lush greenery is

everywhere, and a sweet flowery scent is carried along by a gentle evening breeze. As the sun sets, you praise God and thank Him for the dramatic beauty He has enabled you to behold.



Shortly thereafter, a forest fire ravages the valley. You return to the mountain, this time to a very different sight. The sunlight is obscured by an ominous, ashen fog that chokes life away; you glance around despairingly at the barren, burnt landscape—nothing more than charred ruins. Desolate, gray, eerily silent—the valley, along with all its beauty, has been laid waste.

Now, what if you had a desire to see again what you first saw—the valley blossoming with rich foliage? What would have to happen? Obviously, a vast replanting of trees would need to commence, and then probably forty to fifty years would need to pass. Only then could you stand atop the mountain and relish a scene equal to the first.

A Forest of Family Trees

It pains me to write that the family trees of my culture are being quickly consumed by flames, and, at least in the West, the love and beauty of God-centered family life has been tossed on a great bonfire of selfishness and faithlessness. Men and women, boys and girls are left in emotional defeat, wandering from relationship to relationship in search of something like real love, confused about their identity and their purpose. Family trees once adorned by faith, strength, wisdom, and rooted stability have been splintered apart by divorce and deception, hurt and harm, anger and pride.

This heartbreaking reality has played out in front of my eyes as my wife and I have fostered more than forty children, adopting six of them. Some of their stories could easily be described as a destructive “fire” consuming an entire family tree—multiple generations falling to heroin addiction, fathers absent from the lives of their children, mothers choosing alcohol ahead of their babies, selfish impulses run amok. We’ve worked with children who have been so neglected as to not even be sure of their own names, who by instinct root through trash cans for scraps of food, who by age twelve have already been exposed to and hardened by unspeakable evils.

The percentage of families defined by such tragedy is exponentially increasing. And as any demographer or cultural researcher could attest, the breakdown of families has consequences in nearly every other area of human existence: from economic activity to moral standards, from crime rates to education levels. When parents are addicted, abusive, or absent, the damage done to children all but guarantees even more harm in the next generation, and even more in the next.

If we could stand on a mountaintop above our respective cultures to observe the family trees filling our national valleys (because nations are actually forests of family trees), what would we see? Would we be struck by the beauty and joy God intended for human families? Would we see husbands and wives sacrificially serving each other, “till death do us part”? Would we see children being raised with biblical wisdom, learning respect and dreaming great dreams? Would we see authentic love—selfless *agape*—defining relationships? Would we see families on mission together for God, excelling in productivity, integrity, and purpose?

Or would we see the fires of separation, addiction, idolatry, and immorality raging through the forest? Would we need to strain hard through the smoke to make out the forms of the remaining few once-great trees, now barely clinging to life, losing branch after branch to flaming assaults?

I don't mean to imply that at some point in the past, all was well with families, or that dysfunction is a recent invention. Selfish sin has sadly defined humanity since the first "dysfunctional" family was expelled from the Garden of Eden.

But let's be honest: Are the family trees of Western cultures today heading the right direction? . . . when it comes to marriage? when it comes to lifelong commitment? when it comes to training children to become responsible, productive, visionary adults? when it comes to fatherhood? when it comes to elders imparting wisdom and character to young people?

None of this is new information. Pastors, social scientists, pollsters, and even politicians have been warning us for decades about the dire consequences of unhealthy family dynamics. During my lifetime, I've been witness to a forest fire ravaging millions of once-strong American family trees. And, as I've discovered by conversing with friends from around the world, it seems as though similar realities play out in other cultures as well. Every time another family tree is overtaken by flames, the life, hope, and future potential of its culture is reduced.

To change this story, we don't need a few tweaks. We need a total transformation.

A Vast Replanting Starts With . . .

I'm not suggesting that you or I have the power to reverse all this, to wave a spiritual wand or say a prayer that undoes generations of damage. That's why I'm not going to ask you to "change the world" in this regard. Instead, I'm going to ask if *you* would *love one more*.

A vast replanting of family trees starts with just one seedling, and that's what the call to love one more is about. If it was a lack of familial love that got us into this situation, a recovery of such love will bring new life to the forest, when coupled with the transformational power of the gospel.

If your family tree (though imperfect) is growing in wisdom, love, and purpose through Jesus, could you include one more person to grow along with you? Could you extend the protection and provision of your family tree over him or her, to either graft them into your tree or help them replant theirs?

The Heart of It All

From the Greatest Commandments to the Good Samaritan; from caring about broken Mary Magdalene to befriending the tax collectors like Matthew, Jesus blazed a trail away from prideful self-righteousness and toward genuine love—in particular, love for the least and the lost. As Paul explained, "The whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Galatians 5:14). When we love our neighbors



as much as we love ourselves, and *treat them with the same sacrificial care as we treat our own families*, we fulfill the law of Christ.

The *love one more* challenge can take a number of practical forms:

- Visiting a widow as if she were your mother
- Mentoring a teenager as if she were your daughter
- Reaching unreached groups with the gospel as if they were your own family
- Praying for a lost person as if he were your father
- Caring for a needy coworker as if he were your brother
- Opening your home to a child as if he were your own
- Extending over-the-top hospitality as God gives you opportunity
- Becoming dramatically generous and compassionate in Jesus' name

Loving one more is simply the act of choosing to let someone else into the circle you call "family." Just as Jesus is willing to add "one more" to His household, we follow His example when we add one more to ours. In doing so, we not only expand our family trees, we also help new seedlings grow—family trees replanted in Christ, for His glory and for the good of future generations.



A New Mountaintop Vision

Imagine looking out across your culture in the future, seeing millions of families walking in unity and purpose together. They are seeking God's kingdom, loving each other, experiencing freedom and joy. Imagine a forest of blossoming family trees encouraging each other, creating a context for life and vitality. Imagine culture itself being redeemed, and bringing great glory to God.

For me, I don't have to imagine . . . because this was my family story growing up. When I was ten years old, my parents were on the brink of divorce. My dad was addicted to drugs, battered in his soul by his own alcoholic father before him. He was losing hope, contemplating suicide, giving in to the darkness of sin after a life he thought had been a waste.

The Jarvis family tree was in great peril. The flames were about to claim my sister and me, adding us to the statistics of broken homes and resultant consequences. My mother was trying desperately to hold things together, but her strength was giving way.

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us . . ." (Ephesians 2:4).

Jesus broke into our distressed situation and changed our home into something new and wonderful. My parents today serve God full time as jail chaplains, sharing their story of deliverance. They adopted another child and started a halfway house for women working to overcome addiction and be disciplined in Christ. They founded a ministry together that has touched thousands of lives, and helped in the replanting of countless family trees. And me? Well, I'm writing a story with a happy ending, brought about by redeeming, beautiful, miraculous love!

During the dark times of our family history, there were people who stepped in to love us, who brought us into their hearts and their homes, who wept and hoped and prayed fervently with my mother that something could change. There were friends, coworkers, and pastors who spent countless hours in counsel and in service to us. Their love, prayers, and selfless commitment, coupled with the transformational power of God, changed the trajectory of our family. Not just for the present, but for the future. Now the impact of my parents' "replanting" extends to my children, and will someday to theirs as well, as the Jarvis tree continues to branch out.

When our family was the "one more" that needed love, God's people fulfilled the Greatest Commandment of the law, and the gospel did its transformative work. The day my father gathered my mom, my sister, and me around him so that he could

pray with us about committing his life to Christ—a seedling of a new Christian family tree sprouted to life out of the ashes of sin's ruin.

*Oh, that such a story would be
repeated a million times over! For
all the broken-hearted of this world.
For the children without fathers or
mothers. For the addicted, for the
deceived, for the helpless and impoverished.
For the abused and at-risk.
For those caught in religion but far
away from Jesus. For friends and
enemies alike, there is an answer. It is
love—God's love, illustrated by yours.*

The gospel, when delivered through the sacrificial love of people on mission for God, transforms the world.

Would you like to join in an effort to replant millions of family trees? Would you like to be a part of advancing the gospel in both word and deed, seeing your home not as a retreat from the world but as a mission base in the heart of it? *Would you love one more?*

Perhaps a bright new future for your area of the forest could begin here: "Lord, because of Your great love, we choose to love one more. Who should that be, and how can we get started?" 🌱

Dan Jarvis is Managing Editor for Revive and helps lead various Life Action initiatives. He also serves as teaching pastor for Berrien Center Bible Church in southwest Michigan. He and his wife, Melissa, help manage www.LoveOneMore.org.

In Training to Love

We are all in a training process to love like Jesus. At least, I know I am!

Luke Johnson

Growing up, I went to church a *lot*. In fact, my parents would make us visit churches even when we were away on vacation! I knew a lot about God, but in the end, I really didn't submit my life to Him.

Even more, I didn't really love Him—and that's the key issue, isn't it? I was willing to accept the general premises of Christianity to avoid judgment (because I did have some faith, I guess), but my real love was the world . . . and I couldn't wait to get to college to finally be “free” of my parents and their Bible-based standards.

Thankfully, God changed my perspective during an experience with Summit Ministries in Colorado, just two weeks before my first semester at Purdue University. At college I got involved with

The Navigators ministry, and was transformed from a worldly, self-centered person to a guy who really wanted to impact the world for Jesus Christ.

And that is when my training really began. Not just my academic education, but my training to love like Jesus. It shouldn't come as a surprise to us that love would be at the core of our Christian discipleship—particularly after Jesus emphasized the point when challenged by a Jewish legal expert:

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And [Jesus] said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:36-40).

I think I have a basic understanding of how to “act lovingly” toward neighbors, but this commandment takes things up a level when it states we should love our neighbors “as ourselves.” What exactly does that mean?

Most of us are very good at loving ourselves, even in the mundane choices of life. For example, if two foods are made available, I’m going to “love myself” enough to choose the one I prefer. Or if two pillows are available to sleep on, I’ll of course choose the more comfortable option. Anytime I can provide my “self” something better or more comfortable, I usually go for it, unless there is a higher reason not to do so.

But extending that kind of love to others doesn’t come quite as naturally, particularly when we get beyond our own families. Would I really be willing to give the *best* option to a neighbor, or a coworker, or even an enemy? Even if that means denying myself?

God has used a few situations in my life to teach me this principle.

In college, I knew a quirky, annoying guy who was the type of person most people avoid. He had OCD tendencies and didn’t have any friends. That’s when the Holy Spirit started teaching this lesson: “Luke, are you willing to love an annoying person?”

Knowing the right answer, I reached out to the guy in an intentional act of kindness. I didn’t realize that the real lesson was about to begin—when he decided to shadow me around campus! We had very little in common, but sometimes he would talk to me non-stop—about whatever was in his mind. And even though I didn’t encourage him to continue, he never seemed to run out of words, even when I was actively doing homework.

I remember one time getting up and going to the restroom just to get him to leave me alone—and he actually waited quietly at the door. As soon as I came out, he picked up talking right where he’d left off, and followed me back down the hallway.

He would make a beeline for me anytime he saw me, I think because I was the only person who showed love to him. And that was the lesson I needed to learn: I don’t get to set my own agenda for when I will love someone like Jesus does. I don’t get to say, “I’ll only love you in certain circumstances.” Instead, love actually involves the subjection of my own “self” interest for the good of another.

Another lesson from the Holy Spirit came just after I sold my first home. After the sale, the buyer asked for my address, which I assumed had to do with paperwork, or just to keep in touch, or whatever. A few days later, I was served papers. She had sued me!

Now, in the course of the sale, I hadn’t made any profit, and having just joined a Life Action team, I really didn’t have any assets, either. It became clear that this woman was seeing what she could get out of me, and I learned that she was suing others as well.

My first instinct was to pursue some sort of vindictive justice—to counter-sue her, to make sure she tasted her own medicine, to make sure she felt the stress I was feeling. Instead, we just went to court. She lost the case, and I even offered her some money to help (which I thought would be a Jesus-like thing to do) . . . and then she appealed and took me back to court *again*!

Yes, this was the next level of training to love: Was I willing to love this person who was out to get me? Her allegations were fraudulent and deceptive. My “self” certainly wanted to claim the right to be offended and even angry. But then, I felt like God was asking, “Luke, are you willing to say that you genuinely want good for this woman? Are you willing to love her, to pray for her, to forgive her?”

Training in the school of Jesus’ love never ends, I suppose. The more I grow in Christ, the more I’m challenged to love my neighbor as much as I would love myself—even if it costs me something, even if it hurts, even if everything in me wants to run away.

It is very possible that when we heed the call to love one more, the people we’ll end up loving won’t be the easiest to get along with, and sometimes they’ll even be actively plotting harm. Yet isn’t that exactly the type of love Jesus modeled for us . . . when He invested time with “tax collectors and sinners” (Luke 15:1-2), and when He even reached out in love to the people who would one day nail Him to the cross?

I know my training to love like Jesus is nowhere close to complete, and I’m grateful for the undeserved, unearned love He has poured over my life. Even though the process isn’t easy, I’m glad to learn more lessons from my Savior, whose selfless love means everything to me. 🙏

Idea: Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and substitute the word *love* with your own name. You can use this as a personal metric to test the quality of your love for others!



Luke Johnson, accompanied by his wife, Sarah, and their three sons, has spoken in hundreds of churches through Life Action’s road team ministry, connecting gospel truth to families and teens.

HOW TO START LOVING ONE MORE



1 START WITH GOD'S LOVE

"LOVE IS FROM GOD,

AND WHOEVER LOVES HAS BEEN

BORN OF GOD AND KNOWS GOD."

(1 JOHN 4:7)

When God transforms our hearts and homes by His love, He empowers us to extend His love in all directions. We don't choose to love people because they earn it or deserve it, because God's love to us is not earned or deserved either. We choose to love because we are loved!



2 START PAYING ATTENTION

"A SAMARITAN, AS HE JOURNEYED, CAME TO

WHERE [THE DYING MAN] WAS, AND WHEN

HE SAW HIM, HE HAD COMPASSION. HE WENT

TO HIM. . . ." (LUKE 10:33-34)

All around us, and all around the world, are people who need the love of Jesus and the love of a family. Loving one more requires a new awareness of our surroundings—not just pushing through our day to accomplish our goals or check off our lists, but really looking and listening. Perhaps we can begin in prayer, asking God to alert us to people who need love, affirmation, help, encouragement, and the gospel.

START PRAYING,

ORE

THE CALL TO LOVE OTHERS is core to our commitment as Christian believers, and more, it is essential to the completion of the mission God has in mind for us. There are millions of people across the world who desperately need the love of Jesus and the love of a family. How and where do we start?



3 START SERVING GENEROUSLY

"EVEN THE SON OF MAN CAME NOT TO BE SERVED BUT TO SERVE, AND TO GIVE HIS LIFE AS A RANSOM FOR MANY."

(MARK 10:45)

It is a startling thing to be served. When we take the *love one more* challenge, we aim to serve, share, care, and give to one more, following the example of Jesus. As God loved us—generously, graciously, sacrificially—so we seek to love our neighbors, our coworkers, our fellow students, people on the other side of the world, the least and the lost, even our enemies! Serving generously involves hospitality, compassion, involvement, and selfless concern.



4 START TREATING THEM LIKE FAMILY

"IF YOU REALLY FULFILL THE ROYAL LAW ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURE, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF,' YOU ARE DOING WELL." (JAMES 2:8)

As we serve people, naturally we will begin encountering some we can bring into our inner circle of fellowship and life together. People who have no family of their own, those whose family trees are in disarray, those who have not yet found the love of Jesus—they can become a part of our lives. We can celebrate their victories, own their challenges, weep for their pains, and include them in the significant moments of our lives. We can begin treating them as if they were our mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters. Quite literally, we can love our neighbors as ourselves.

"LORD, WHO IS THE NEXT 'ONE MORE' I CAN LOVE?"



Spiritual Awakening Brings

SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION

BOB BAKKE

A few years ago, I was in a mountainside city on the outskirts of Cairo, Egypt, visiting a pastor named Father Samaan. The entire population of this city is dedicated to the collecting and processing of Cairo's garbage. In fact, it is called "Garbage City."



"GARBAGE CITY," CAIRO, EGYPT

When Samaan arrived in the city thirty-five years ago, the homes were made of sticks and mud and tin. The people were humiliated by their condition—uneducated, unloved, lost. And no one attended church.

But a spiritual awakening has taken place in that city. It did not come in like a flood, but like a rising tide. The few believers who first gathered in Samaan's living room are now thousands. They worship in a cave—an astonishing amphitheater among the forgotten rock quarries of the Pharaohs, used for building the Great Pyramids.

This amphitheater seats 20,000. It's the largest church facility in the Middle East. Mid-week Bible study draws thousands. In recent years over 70,000 believers gathered there from across Cairo to pray for the nation.

And "Garbage City" has been transformed. It is still devoted to processing garbage (and if you're not used to it, the smell will make your eyes water), but the homes are now brick and cement and cinder block and full of prayer and singing.

The main roads are now paved. There are primary and secondary schools, trade schools and clinics. There are industries for recycled goods and the fabrication of plastics gleaned from the piles of waste. There are retail and wholesale businesses to distribute the goods.

The organic materials are used for livestock and gardening. What's more, the garbage collectors who scatter across the neighborhoods of Cairo every morning consider themselves missionaries, taking the gospel where no one else is allowed.*

The lesson is as simple as the gospel. In Mark 12, one of the teachers of the law asked Jesus:

"Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:28-31 NIV).

In Acts 2-6, in the wake of the most consequential revival the world has ever seen, the new believers—full of the Holy Spirit, eyes focused on Christ—filled the streets of Jerusalem with awe and wonder. They loved each other deeply, cared for each other, resolved ethnic and economic difficulties, and witnessed a breathtaking expansion of the church.

Whatever God's reviving Spirit does in us and among us to fix our eyes on Jesus—clearing away everything that hinders or entangles us—the Spirit also does *for the blessing of other people*.

The examples of this from history are innumerable. For an account of the early church, read Rodney Stark's *The Rise of Christianity*; or, from a period much later, read the story of George Mueller and his orphanages. Or look to William Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect, who were instrumental in the abolition of English slavery; or to Lord Anthony Ashley Cooper, who devoted himself to righting the horrific abuses of the Industrial Revolution, including child labor. Or Methodist William Booth, who founded a gracious army to combat the catastrophic consequences of the gin trade. Or men like William Carey and Hudson Taylor, who gave their lives to introduce Christ to the unreached millions of Asia.

In January 2014, *Christianity Today* published an interview with Robert Woodbury, whose Ph.D. thesis tracked the influence of



A HEAVILY LADEN TRUCK OF GARBAGE IN "GARBAGE CITY"

Protestant missions on the nations of the earth. He traveled to Thailand and India to consult with local scholars; dug through archives in London, Edinburgh, and Serampore, India; and talked with church historians all over Europe, North America, Asia, and Africa. Woodberry's findings contradict the stereotype that foreign missions advanced colonialism and repression; in fact, the record shows that Protestant missionaries not funded by the state were in fact regularly very critical of colonialism.

In the process of his research, Woodberry dug into one of the great enigmas of modern history: Why do some nations develop stable, representative democracies in which citizens enjoy the rights to vote, speak, and assemble freely, while neighboring countries suffer authoritarian rulers and internal conflict, poor public health and stagnant economic growth? Often these countries even share similar geography, cultural background, and natural resources . . . so what makes the difference?

His research shows that areas where Protestant missionaries had a significant presence in the past are, on average, more economically developed today, with comparatively better health, lower infant mortality, lower corruption, greater literacy, higher educational attainment (especially for women), and more robust membership in nongovernmental associations.

As an American, I can see this in the history of my own nation—how social transformation was really rooted in spiritual awakening and revival. In the 1790s, the U.S. was racked by severe social problems: disease, economic hardship, internal political

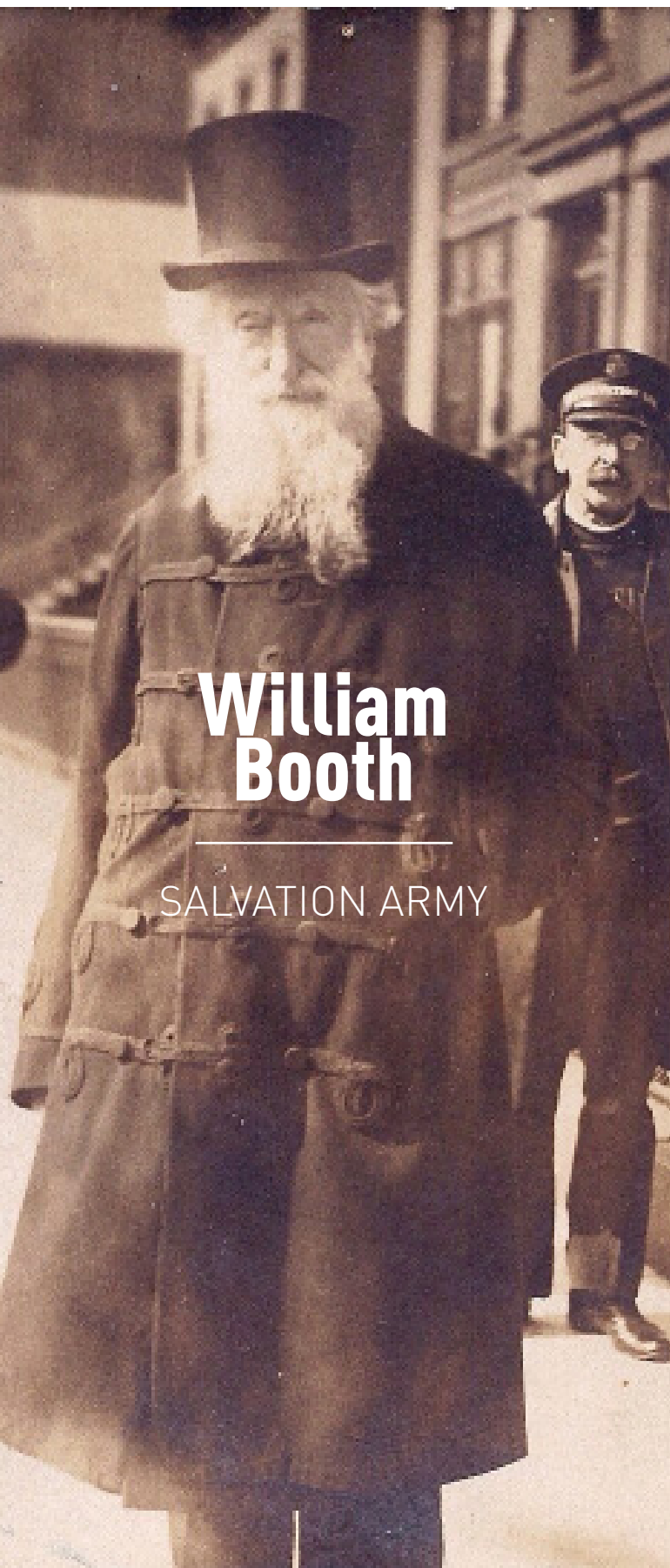
bickering, empty churches, Unitarianism and Universalism, fear of the French Revolution and its godless Enlightenment, slavery, fear of war, the scourge of Muslim pirates on the open seas, Bible burnings on college campuses, and much more.

But in 1801, an explosive revival was detonated by the Holy Spirit that swept the nation in multiple waves for nearly fifty years. It fundamentally altered the American landscape. In its wake were not only millions of committed believers, tens of thousands of new churches, and the modern missionary movement, but schools, hospitals, orphanages, a civil society, the underground railroad, the abolition movement, and more. Historian Mark Knoll calls the Great Awakening during this period the single most influential social movement in American history.

Time after time, in nation after nation, the pattern is the same. When the Holy Spirit moves, lives are transformed. And when those transformed lives start loving others, serving with compassion, adopting God's priorities, and sharing the gospel boldly, the surrounding community starts to change. Families change direction. Culture itself changes direction. Spiritual awakening brings societal transformation. 🌱

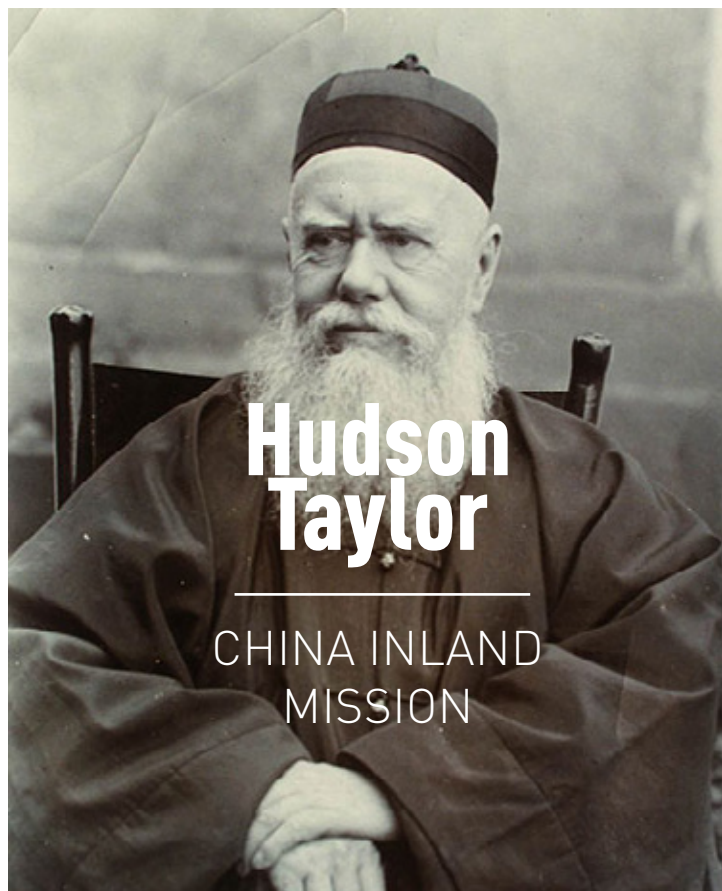
* You can watch the story on YouTube:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=e01d40ITi_k

Dr. Bob Bakke pastors Hillside Church in Bloomington, Minnesota. He is an author and a producer of television and radio simulcasts that allow millions to pray simultaneously. He serves on the OneCry Advisory Board.



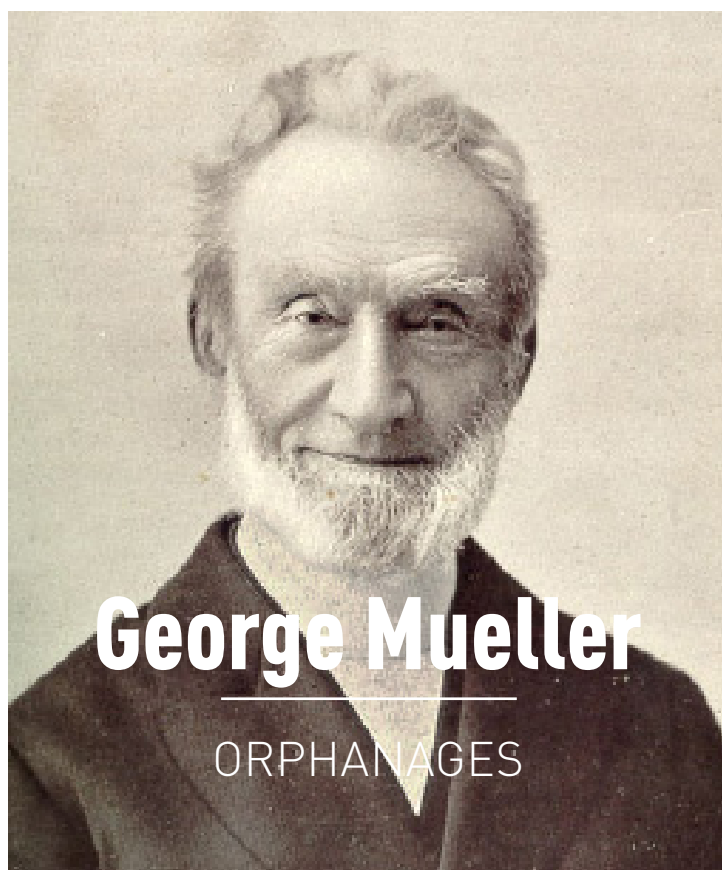
**William
Booth**

SALVATION ARMY



**Hudson
Taylor**

CHINA INLAND
MISSION



George Mueller

ORPHANAGES

A LOVE SUPPLIED BY FAITH

*Love, which is the fruit of the Spirit,
who is supplied through faith, which
is sustained by the Word of God*

JOHN PIPER

W

hen we discuss the depths of Christ's love for us, we know that the cost of it was infinite. The strength of it was great enough to overcome our ungodliness and unworthiness.

And His love was free. No one took His life from Him. He laid it down of His own accord. He loves His people—those who will have this love as their treasure—with a love that cannot be greater.

But what is it that practically converts the love of Christ for us into our love for others? In Galatians 5:13-16 we read:

You were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Then look at verses 22-23:

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Love for others is a fruit—it grows in our lives by the Holy Spirit's doing. It is not produced by merely human forces. It takes resources we don't have.

This is very crucial for us to admit. It's humbling. Left to ourselves, we *cannot* love. So, when we do, we don't get the glory for it—God does.

This is encouraging. If you feel you are not "by nature" a loving person, you're not at a disadvantage, because *no one is by nature a loving person*. If we were, love would not be a fruit of the Holy Spirit; it would be a fruit of personality or upbringing or chro-

mosomes. In fact, the person who feels that love is a natural thing may have a harder time learning how to truly love because they may not look for the resources in the right place.

And that leads us to the second part of the answer regarding the link of Christ's love to our own: *faith*. Galatians 5:6 explains: "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love."

In other words, if you look to your own merit, or to the merit of the things you can do, then the all-sufficient worth of Christ in dying for your sins and obtaining your salvation will be of no use. When you depend on your works, you reject the work of Christ.

What makes this verse so remarkable is that the faith that connects us with Jesus and receives His justification is "faith that works through love." In other words, it's a kind of faith that *proves* its reality by producing love.

What Can We Do to Become More Loving?

Do you want to have a heart that is more free to care for the hurting? Do you want the heart to love your enemies and bless those who curse you? Do you want to be less self-absorbed and less enslaved to things, more free to take risks and make sacrifices for others?

If so, then make it your aim day and night to be filled with the fruit-bearing Holy Spirit . . . because the fruit of the Spirit is love.

This is where we live. We don't ever grow beyond this. Our aim is love, which is the fruit of the Spirit, who is supplied through faith, which is sustained by the Word of God that portrays for us the depths of Christ's love. 🌟

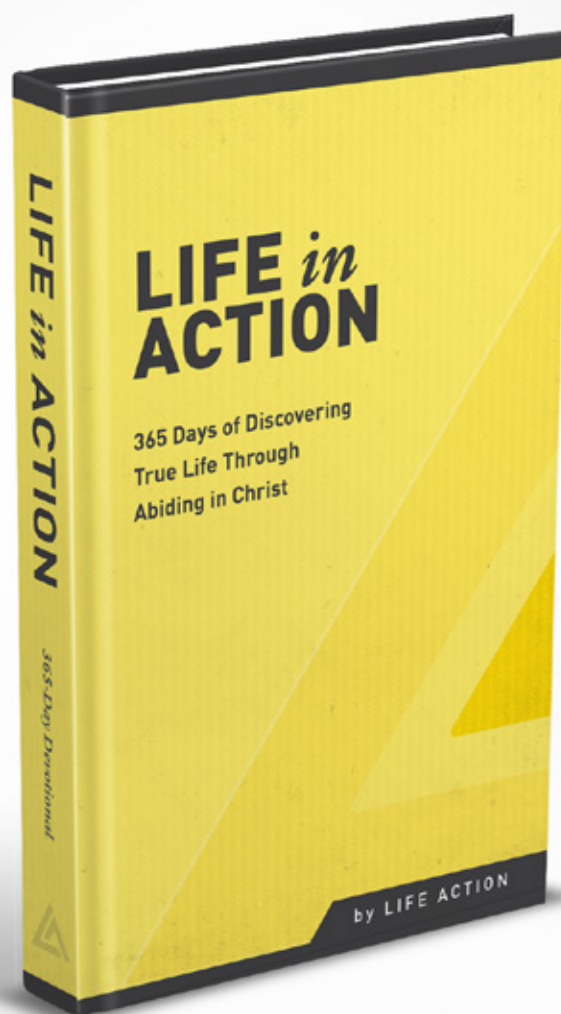
John Piper is founder and teacher of Desiring God and chancellor of Bethlehem College & Seminary. This article is a condensed version of a sermon in his series The Greatest of These Is Love, available in full at www.DesiringGod.org.

YOU DID IT TO THE LEAST OF THESE

And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."

Matthew 25





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HOW'S YOUR LOVE LIFE?

► God loves us because He chooses to love us. This same kind of love ought to characterize our own lives. The world will know we belong to Jesus when they see us loving each other selflessly and sacrificially.



FROM THE HEART

Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth
Revive Our Hearts Radio Host

Jesus came to help us see the love of God.

 @NancyDeMoss

When the great Russian poet Pushkin finally married in 1831, he said it was the 113th time he had fallen in love. Obviously he didn't know the deepest meaning of the word *love*!

The world is desperate for love; and while everyone has a longing to experience it, so many are mistaken about its real meaning. For example, we use the word *love* very casually. "I love pizza. I love my new dishwasher. I love my baby." We use one word—*love*—to describe things as different as a dishwasher and our own newborn!

To find the meaning of true love, then, we'll have to look past our modern culture and into what the Word of God says. God Himself defines love, actually, and in the New Testament we discover an ancient Greek word for love, *agape*.

Unlike our English word *love*, the Greek word *agape* never refers to romantic feelings. It never refers to sexual love. It doesn't refer to just having warm feelings about someone or something. It's not a word that speaks of close friendship or even brotherly love.

There are other words that do communicate those nuances. *Agape* has nothing to do with the slushy sentimentalism that so many today believe to be the real thing.

As we look at Scripture, we see that *agape* love is a God quality, something supernatural. We need God in our lives to have this kind of love. *It's self-sacrificing, others-first, laying-down-my-life love*. It has nothing to do with pleasing myself.

I heard a definition of godly love years ago that has stuck in my heart and become a measuring tool for my own love: *Genuine love is totally giving of myself to meet the needs of another person, without expecting anything in return.*

Now, it's easy to give to meet the needs of another person—we've all done that many

times—but I find that often I have this subtle, secret desire for any love I give to be reciprocated. I'm doing something to serve, but I'm also really hoping that person will love me in return.

But *agape* love is when I give myself totally—laying down my life, if need be—for the benefit of another person, without expecting to get anything in return.

God's *agape* love obviously starts in His heart and flows into our lives. God wants to put that kind of selfless love into our hearts as well. I'm talking ultimately not about a feeling, rather about a choice. *Agape* love is a determined act of my will.

The supreme measure and example of *agape* love is found in God's love for us. Romans 5:6-8 tells us, "While we were still weak [helpless], at the right time Christ died for the ungodly," and it says, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

So we have a God who loved us, not because we deserved it, but just because He is love, and He made the choice to love us. When Jesus came to this earth in the form of a man, He came to help us see the love of God.

Scripture tells us that this kind of love ought to be the supreme mark of the people of God. In fact, Jesus said that the way the world will stop and take notice of our relationship with Him is that Christians will love each other the same way He loved them—in a selfless, sacrificing, serving way (John 13:34).

That's why the Bible tells us to "pursue love" (1 Corinthians 14:1). So, let's go hard after it. Let's make it our aim, our goal, to learn how to love others as Jesus loved us.

Let me conclude by asking you directly, "How is your *agape* love life?"



WHY DOESN'T GOD SEEM AS LOVING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?

Justice itself can be an extension of God's love, in halting the ruinous evil that will only serve to harm more lives.

DR. RICHARD FISHER

In my experience, people question the love of God in the Old Testament because they underestimate the terrible effects of evil, the far-reaching consequences of sin, and the high price that must be paid for redemption. It is easy to forget the times when evil has pounced on the

weak, persecuted the helpless, and devoured the nations. As people dream of a social paradise, they tend to sweep the actual threat of sin under a politically correct rug, turning a blind eye toward the realities of human depravity.

In truth, justice itself can be an

extension of God's love, in halting the ruinous evil that will only serve to harm more lives.

Then, of course, there is the evil in our own hearts, and the pride that keeps us from admitting it. Rather than acknowledge the loving warnings of God against sin, some

choose to blame God's "lack of love" for their problems (or to deny His existence altogether). Thus, they continue to face the consequences of their poor, selfish decisions rather than reading the Bible, trusting God with all their hearts, asking for forgiveness, thinking critically, and acting with moral courage

(see 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Proverbs 3:5-6; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 16:13).

Two specific moments in the history of God's people call this to mind for me:

- In Hosea 11:12 (NIV), Israel created their own little self-centered universe and saw Yahweh as their "local god," whose sole task was to make life pleasant for them. They did not listen to God's revelation; rather, they redefined the Creator in their own image. Hence they misunderstood and miscommunicated God. "Ephraim has surrounded me with lies, Israel with deceit. And Judah is unruly against God, even against the faithful Holy One." Israel, in their childish rebellion, saw Yahweh God as the pagans saw the gods of Mt. Olympus or Mt. Zaphon. "Although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Romans 1:21).
- In Malachi 1:2, Israel blamed God for the evil that befell them. Like myopic children, they did not consider the consequences of their own selfish, sinful choices; by accusing God of being unloving, they were really trying to divert attention away from their own guilt. They refused to acknowledge the leadership and wisdom of God, which has always been rooted in love.

In fact, God's love exists on every page of the Old Testament—even in those situations when people or nations were in all-out rebellion against Him. Those who were angry at God were the ones who did not trust Him and thus, in their rebellion, incurred His just wrath rather than the blessings of His love. Of course they felt an absence of divine affection because their sins had separated them from God (Isaiah 59:2).

But consider this: The people of that era who trusted God and walked with Him were certainly satisfied in the love of God;

they often went out of their way to praise His name and His ways! (See Psalm 145 as an example.)

But What About . . . ?

When this discussion comes up, many inquire about the accounts of God decreeing judgment on families or destruction on cities. Could a loving God do these things?

I think it can be healthy to turn the tables a bit in that conversation and consider God's overtures of undeserved love, forgiving mercy, second chances, and advance warnings (usually with opportunities for repentance attached) made to pagan cities like Nineveh and Sodom, right alongside such offers made to His chosen nation of Israel.

1. Jeremiah 18:7-8, "If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned."

This judgment-overriding mercy of God is showcased clearly in the story of Jonah, even as the narrative centers on the prophet's own reluctance to obey God (mirroring Israel's unwillingness to fulfill its gospel mandate among the nations). The inference is that all along, God desired mercy for the city, as Jonah correctly predicted in his selfish frustration (Jonah 4:2). Was this divine mercy available to other Old Testament cultures upon which God had decreed judgment? I think we have good evidence that this is the case, in considering the faith of Rahab, the redemption of Ruth, the humbling of Nebuchadnezzar, etc.

2. Isaiah 65:1-3, "I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, 'Here am I, here am I.' All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations—a people who continually provoke me to my very face."

Paul references this text in Romans 10 in describing the mercy of God (v. 21). Here, all-powerful Yahweh is offering a path forward, a path of restoration—literally holding out His hands and pleading with them to choose the road of life. Is this not the same love that eventually brought Jesus to the cross? "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

3. Hosea 11:1-8 reviews God's love for Israel: "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. . . . I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love. To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down to feed them. . . . How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? . . . My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused."

In these and many other examples, the prophets saw God as a loving Father who cares for His children. Even in judgment, His aim has been to give people a hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11).

The Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever

The New Testament is not introducing us to a "new and improved" or softer version of God. Rather, Jesus came to demonstrate in human flesh what has been in the heart of God all along: to love us with an everlasting, familial love.

This great love, then, that we see written across the ages, provides an example we can follow—to love others in the same patient, gracious, forgiving, visionary way that God has loved us.



Dr. Richard Fisher has served as a professor and regional director with Moody Bible Institute.



TRUE LOVE HURTS

If I had known the heartache we would walk through over the next few years, I'm not sure how much joy I would have felt in that moment.

MELISSA JARVIS

There really isn't a glamorous side to foster parenting.

You might get accolades from friends saying how wonderful it is that you "love those kids." But the reality is, it doesn't *feel* wonderful most of the time. Sometimes it feels as if your heart is being ripped out of your body and there isn't much hope for healing the hurt. I could share a number of stories like this, but I've settled on two to offer here.

First, Tonia's story.

A petite, beautiful, abandoned and sexually abused teenager sat on my living room couch with guarded nervousness

as she asked if she could "please go to church once or twice a month."

My husband and I hadn't intended to foster teens, at least not at that stage of our lives, but something about Tonia's story made us say yes. When we heard that her first and only request was to attend church, we laughed and said, "Wow, you've come to the right place!" (At that time my husband was a youth pastor.) However, if I had known the heartache we would walk through over the next few years, I'm not sure how much joy I would have felt in that moment.

Walking the road of bad friends, anger, lies, immorality, manipulation, apathy . . . I felt

totally overwhelmed with the brokenness Tonia was experiencing in her life. For six months I listened to her talk about dreams but then make choices that prohibited those dreams from happening.

The day she left our home, she convinced herself (along with help from a now-long-gone boyfriend) that she could make more money and have a better life living with friends in a government housing project. That was the day I learned that you cannot help someone who doesn't want to be helped.

Tonia gave up a fully state-sponsored ride to college in order to enjoy "freedom" and welfare checks. A few months later, a now

desperate, anguish-filled “little girl” called me from an abortion clinic asking me to not let them “kill my baby.” A month later, the same scenario happened with even more desperation, as she wept: “My boyfriend will kick me out if I don’t have an abortion; then I’ll be homeless.”

The baby was saved, thankfully, but Tonia’s prognosis went from bad to worse—another pregnancy, domestic abuse, lies, substance abuse, no job, no money, no support system. Through phone calls and occasional visits we stayed in contact, but gradually those fell away too. My heart still hurts for her. Was it her fault that she was abandoned as a baby, abused as a young teen, then abandoned again? At what point did that little hurting girl become mature and responsible?

We got into this because we wanted to make a better future possible for children, to show them what real love looks like, to help them make wise choices, to bring Jesus’ redeeming power into dark situations. But what do you say when the person you’re loving rejects it and goes completely the opposite direction? What do you do when their bad choices become irreversible?

Tonia’s story doesn’t have a happy ending, at least not yet. I keep praying for her.

And then there was Brian.

He was just eight years old, hardened by a life of being passed from home to home, in and out of foster care, with parents in jail and plenty of domestic violence already a part of his life story. He came to our home filled with rage and anger at the world.

I’m sure he had never had anyone tuck him into bed or say something to him like, “We’re praying for you!” In that sense, living in our home was quite an adjustment for the little guy—a consistent schedule, no swearing or yelling or beatings or hiding from caregivers. I remember when my husband, with tears in his eyes, reported to me: “Brian just said he feels *safe* for the first time in his life!”

In the midst of all the transitions, Brian had been watching *Veggie Tales* and reading a children’s Bible with Dan at night. I’ll never forget the day it dawned on him that *Veggie Tales* were actually playful versions of real Bible stories. He *loved* his Bible. Brian soon told us that he wanted what we had—whatever “it” was that made us Christians! We were able to pray along with him as he received Jesus into his young life.

And he really did change—from an angry little boy to a caring, affectionate part of our family. He started asking about staying in our home forever. But Brian’s future was bleak, as there was no legal hope for a permanent, stable home (other than his incarcerated parents doing the “right thing” and voluntarily giving up their rights, which rarely occurs).

We’ve all heard stories about children falling through the cracks in the system. Brian was one of them. He ended up being forced

I can love one more.
And I can choose that
love even when it hurts,
because I have hope
that God’s promises
and plan will prevail.

to move to a different state. And even though we offered to keep him, the legal process took things a different direction. Our input, and his, made no difference in the outcome.

Our hearts broke for the future of this precious boy we were beginning to love as a son. For all we know, Brian is still in a group home. We pray that the short time he was with us made him feel truly loved. Because he is.

On the night before he left, he asked me tearfully, as I knelt by his bedside to say a final goodnight, “Why does this keep happening to me?”

I could go on and on with stories that were never resolved, or where justice was not served. My heart hurts all over again just thinking about each child and wondering where they are today. Are they alive? Have they had food? Are they scared? Do they remember what love feels like?

And it makes me wonder: If my heart hurts so much, what must God be feeling when He sees sin and sadness affecting innocent children like Tonia or Brian, or the millions of others like them across the world who are orphaned, abused, or at risk?

I know I can’t love them all. But I can love one more. And I can choose that love even when it hurts, because I have hope that God’s promises and plan will prevail.



Melissa Jarvis is wife to Dan and mother to six adopted children. She lives in southwest Michigan and makes it a goal to encourage parents who are journeying through foster care or adoption. She is helping to build a community of friends who “love one more” at LoveOneMore.org.



ACTUALLY SEEING PEOPLE

I hadn't been physically blind before, but I only saw the people who were convenient to see. My ministry time was sectioned off into tidy, scheduled events.

LIZA HARTMAN

I'll never forget when I started actually seeing people. Oh, I hadn't been physically blind before, but I only saw the people who were convenient to see. My ministry time was sectioned off into tidy, scheduled events: Pregnancy Care Center time, then youth group time, then take-someone-a-meal time.

I tried hard to pour energy into the people I encountered. I wanted to be a good peer counselor, a good youth group worker, and of course, pleasing to Jesus. But I rarely felt like I was connecting. And, even more disconcerting, it was hard for me to believe that this was all God wanted of me.

Inevitable burnout was looming, and through the grace of God, I was brought to desperation. I took a break from all my activity for a few weeks and sat on a park bench with my Bible and journal. I waited for Jesus to come and give me direction.

And He did come. *Oh, did He come!* And He didn't reprimand me. He didn't give me a list of things to work on. He didn't give me tips and tricks on how to reach the lost. He just told me He loved me . . . that I already had an "A" on the test because of Jesus, and I could quit trying so hard.

We never really got past that, as He gently untangled years of self-serving love with His unconditional love. He became my Treasure in those few weeks, and it has become my greatest joy to sell everything to find more of that Treasure (see Matthew 13:44).

From that moment, things started to change. He loved me so much that it overflowed. It's like I had brand new eyes to see the world and the people in it. I saw the lady at the laundromat, and we both cried as she unloaded her burdens and I shared the gospel.

I saw the hardened-by-life woman cutting my hair at Great Clips, and I remember telling her, "I'm not usually this forward with people. But for some reason, I really love you, and I wonder what you think about Jesus?"

I saw the two lesbian backpackers with meth-stained teeth at Starbucks and couldn't help but strike up a conversation to see if they knew about Jesus.

I saw them. And I loved them.

But, truthfully, this wasn't *my* heart at all. I knew my heart. My love was shallow and self-serving and completely nervous about loving outside of my comfort zone. I didn't even recognize this Liza. But I did begin to recognize God's heart working itself out in me. This was God Himself, using my mouth, my hands and feet, to love like He loves.

He saw them. And He loved them.

This was a vital shift in my thinking, and it has changed the way I live my life and love people. What Paul wrote to the Corinthians

*I didn't even recognize
this Liza. But I did begin
to recognize God's heart
working itself out in me.
This was God Himself,
using my mouth, my
hands and feet, to love
like He loves.*

is true: The love of Christ compels us (2 Corinthians 5:14). There is nothing so compelling and sustaining as the love of Christ. An encounter with Jesus Christ changed the vision of my heart from simply "not sinning" to being a glad and free participant in His mission in the world.

I've since moved to an urban area of a nearby city to work with and live among at-risk kids and their families. I moved simply because I wanted to be closer to the people that I knew Jesus wanted to love through me. While not without its hardships, it has been pure joy to be His representative in a place that desperately needs to know His love.

Jesus always loves one more, and by His grace I will too.



Liza Hartman serves as Art Director for Revive. She lives near South Bend, Indiana, and is loving one more by mentoring young girls and sharing Christ's love in the city. She blogs about her life and mission at www.LizaHartman.com.



LOVING ONE MORE flows out of God's great love for us. As He does His transformative work in our hearts, we begin to overflow His compassion, grace, and generosity to the people around us.

HEART CHECKUP

- Have I repented of my love for this world and been filled instead with God's love? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Have I been adopted into God's family, and do I have assurance of that relationship? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Have I experienced God's love personally? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered "No" to any of the above, reference 1 John 5:13; John 10:7-15; Romans 5:1-11; 1 John 2:15-17; John 1:12.

VISION CHECKUP

I AM MORE LIKELY TO SEE:

- ☐ What people have done
- ☐ What people can do for me
- ☐ Why I don't have time to love
- ☐ The potential of myself getting hurt
- ☐ The price I'll pay for being compassionate
- ☐ A difficult person who is in my way
- ☐ Endless needs I could never meet
- ☐ Reasons I should say "no"
- ☐ One more I am obligated to love

[OR]

- ☐ What people could become
- ☐ What I can do for people
- ☐ Ways I can make time to love
- ☐ The potential of someone else feeling loved
- ☐ The resources God would provide to help me
- ☐ A difficult person God has sent my way
- ☐ Endless opportunities to showcase God's love
- ☐ Reasons I should say "yes"
- ☐ One more God would allow me to love

ATTITUDE CHECKUP

Luke 10:25-37 – When I meet someone who needs help, I:

- ☐ Actively avoid them
- ☐ Assume someone else will reach out
- ☐ Feel disdain toward them
- ☐ Personally engage with compassionate concern

Matthew 5:38-48 – When someone hurts me, I:

- ☐ Seek retribution
- ☐ Start ignoring them
- ☐ Harbor bitterness and anger
- ☐ Forgive them and seek their best

Luke 7:36-50 – When I encounter someone unpopular or "high maintenance," my first reaction is to:

- ☐ Reduce my exposure to them
- ☐ Internally mock and dishonor them
- ☐ Pray for wisdom to serve and love as Jesus would

Luke 14:13-14 – When challenged to love someone who can't return the favor, I:

- ☐ Avoid making an emotional connection
- ☐ Hope someone else will make the sacrifice
- ☐ Offer only minimal care/concern
- ☐ Love unconditionally, regardless of what it might cost me



HOW MIGHT YOU AND/OR YOUR FAMILY BEGIN LOVING ONE MORE?

I could see myself potentially:

- ☐ Inviting a neighbor or coworker over for dinner
- ☐ Intentionally cultivating additional friendships
- ☐ Mentoring a younger person
- ☐ Adopting a child
- ☐ Foster parenting or serving at-risk children
- ☐ Praying for people who need God's love
- ☐ Making a plan for household hospitality
- ☐ Involving someone without nearby family in our holiday gatherings
- ☐ Including a widow in our family for care and friendship
- ☐ Opening our home to international students
- ☐ Sponsoring children globally or supporting children's homes
- ☐ Taking gift baskets to my neighbors
- ☐ Engaging in long-term personal discipleship with a new believer
- ☐ Hosting parties to invite people in and hear their stories
- ☐ Picking someone up for church or other family events
- ☐ Using my business or professional skills to extend love to others
- ☐ Learning about/giving to ministry work in difficult parts of the world
- ☐ Asking my pastor about opportunities to love one more
- ☐ Volunteering for community service or with local ministries (jails, hospitals, schools, etc.)
- ☐ My own idea: _____

"WE KNOW WHAT REAL LOVE IS because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person? Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions."

[1 John 3:16-18 NLT]

Note to Pastors and Teachers:

Could your church or group develop a "love one more" culture? What would that involve? How might such a culture begin? To download a free resource kit to help you cast vision for loving one more in a church context, visit LoveOneMore.org/church.



action



Love One Hundred More

In God's household there is never a sign that says, "Sorry, no more space here." There is always a way to bring in, accept, embrace, and extend generous love one more time, in one more direction.

by Sam Stephens



When Prati and I had our first child, we thought we could never love another in the same way. Yet, when our second was born, we discovered that our hearts had been created with more capacity to love than we realized—rather than being “divided,” the love in our hearts multiplied!

Of course, at the time, we thought, “We can’t possibly love other children as much as we love our biological children . . .”

But we were wrong again.

God started to bring one more in, and then another and another. As our household grew, we discovered amazing grace from God that allowed our hearts to keep stretching and expanding, never reaching an endpoint. Of course, each person we embraced as family required a unique kind of love, but God gave us grace to meet that need. I believe He gives such grace to *anyone* who chooses to love one more.

As of today, the *love one more* lifestyle has brought 350–400 people into our household, which also serves as a mission station in southern India. In addition to our two biological children, about 100 children of various ages now look to Prati and me as their adoptive parents, calling us Mom and Dad and treating our home as their own.

The strength and resources to do this come from God, not from us. There is no limit to God's household, and there need be no limit on ours. God will provide for us when we seek His kingdom priorities first (Matthew 6:33).

I sometimes wonder what would have happened if, in a moment of human perspective, I had declared, “Two children are enough. I can’t possibly love or afford any others!” What if I had closed the doors of my household, content to focus attention on the children I already had? My wife and I would never have experienced God’s grace to grow in love. We would never have experienced the joy and blessing that come with an ever-expanding household.

As long as there is one more to love, our households (yours and mine) can keep making room for one more. God will pour His unique grace into our hearts for the unique circumstances we will inevitably encounter. We don’t have to muster the strength, money, or emotions on our own. God will provide!

I was once visiting a rural area of India, encouraging pastors in the region. A villager approached me with his infant daughter, and, as would be customary in the culture, I assumed he wanted me to pray over her. I took her in my arms and began to pray. When I opened my eyes, *the man was walking away!*

He wasn’t looking for prayer; he was literally giving away a daughter he could not care for, to me!

What went through my mind in that moment? Something like, “Wait, that time in my life has passed. I’m done parenting!” And then a quietly desperate, “Lord, what should I do?”

My definition of family was about to expand again, this time to the next generation. As it worked out, one of my grown children decided to adopt this beautiful girl . . . making me a proud and excited grandfather! How amazing are the ways of God, when we adopt His ideas for life and family rather than trust in our own limited vision.

The doors to God’s heart, and to His household, are always open. Perhaps ours should be as well? 🙏

Sam and Prati Stephens lead an indigenous network of church-planting pastors in South Asia, and their organization, India Gospel League, ministers to hundreds of thousands of children every year through child sponsorship, education initiatives, and discipleship clubs. If you’d like to “love one more” by helping a child in a needy village, visit www.IGLWorld.org/kids.

WHERE DO I SIGN UP?

► I don't know what joys or tears may be around the corner . . . whether our love will lead the next person to Christ or cause us deep pain. But it's not about me. As a follower of Jesus, I'm called to keep re-enlisting.

Ten years ago, I had absolutely no idea what I was signing up for. Melissa and I were recently married; we'd settled into what would become a long-term church job. We were making friends, looking for community connections, and trying to share the gospel.

Ever since she was a young child, my wife always had it in her heart to care for orphaned children; and while my emotional commitment wasn't quite as strong, I believed in it. I knew it was intrinsic to the Christian faith, to "look after orphans and widows in their distress" (James 1:27 NIV), and that, since we were buying our first home, we might as well use it as a mission base. That logic landed me in foster parent orientation, provided by our local government.

From there, more than forty children came in and out of our lives, with all the difficulties you might expect (see my wife's article on p. 24). Ours became a world of diaper changes and social worker visits, abuse-prevention training and catch-up medical appointments.

There was Briana, an older teen who was cutting herself after years of mental illness and parental neglect; and there was "Baby," a child we loved dearly for two years who was pulled away from our family after a state agency lost his custody case.

There was Jordan, a toddler who had been abandoned in an empty apartment; and there was Jasmine, who was removed from her home late one Christmas Eve, waking to a Jarvis family Christmas morning.

One afternoon, I saw an email bulletin from our agency, asking about care for three children, ages 4, 4, and 3, for a week or two, as the family had a legal situation to sort out. I thought, "Hey, why not?" and forwarded the note to my wife. She followed up, and that "week or two" turned into six months, then another six months, and now today—well, those are three of the six children we've adopted into our forever family.

The day those three came to our home, after returning from my church office, I found all of them in our driveway giggling and riding little tricycles. "Well, Honey, what do you think?" I asked Melissa. "Oh, this will be easy," my wife said, referring to our one-week commitment. As it turns out, my wife is gifted in mercy, not prophecy.

Through all of these amazing, messy, heart-breaking, unjust, rarely-happily-ending stories, we also forged some wonderful personal friendships with other foster families, social workers, the law enforcement community, various service providers, and even some of the children's parents—people we would have never met or loved had it not been for that initial "yes" to foster care.

Now, I don't think everyone should be a foster parent (although I suspect more people should be than actually are yet). But in the end, fostering and adoption are only two of a thousand ways we can love one more.

Right now, our "quiver" feels fairly full with the six young children we have, so we've taken a hiatus from active fostering, and we're looking for different ways to love one more. That's led us to everything from child sponsorships to a refreshed commitment to personal hospitality, from mission activity to serving churches through our work in Life Action.

I've learned something in this process that keeps me leaning on Christ's promise of provision in Matthew 6:33. Every time I say yes to loving one more, I have no idea what I'm signing up for. Cost? Heartbreak? Success? Failure? Reward? Disappointment?

I don't know what joys or tears may be around the corner, whether our love will lead that person to Christ or cause my family deep pain, whether it will end quickly or never end after all. But as a follower of Jesus, I must keep re-enlisting. It's not about me, anyway. It's about the next *one more* who needs God's love, and maybe mine too.



NEXT STEP

Dan Jarvis
Managing Editor

It's about the next one more who needs God's love, and maybe mine too.

 @DanJarvisUS

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Dan".

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