

Let's Fall in Love with God

Chapter 4: Critical Understandings

(John Henry Alan, edited by Bob Clarkson)

{ Read deliberately! }

Dynamics of a passionate love affair with God,

“All You Need Is Love” (How to become intimately abandoned to God). “Why shouldn’t we fall in love with God?”

Going On In

Regeneration (rebirth) makes the natural man a Christian, which deposits within him the very Spirit of God. God brings us out of bondage, not so that we may be out, but so that we may be brought in. God saves a criminal, not so that he can brag about it for the next 40 years, but so that he might become mature in his relationship with God. God takes him out of his bondage to selfishness so that he might lead that person into a life of relational wholeness and freedom. And the farther in the man goes, the less he will want to talk about where he used to be.

It is not the mark of spirituality when I talk at length about what I used to be. Today, we magnify what we used to be and write books to tell the world about it. Paul said, “those things ought not even to be mentioned among the people of God.” Ephesians 5:12 God brought you out, but He does not leave you in limbo. He brought you out so that he might bring you in. And that is the will of God.

Three Kinds of Man

If you are a natural man, no matter how well educated, how talented, how handsome or how desirable you are, you do not know a thing about the heart and affections of God. And you do not know a thing about the spiritual life. You do not have the faculties to know it. If a man who is stone deaf sits reading while a Mozart symphony is playing, you would not blame him because he would rather read than listen to the music. He does not have the ability to enjoy the music. The ability you have in you to listen to the symphony is dead in him.

Or if you were in an art gallery, looking at paintings, and there was a man completely blind sitting on the bench, you would not ask, “Why is that dim wit just sitting there? Why doesn't he get up and look at the paintings?” He does not have the ability to look at paintings. The ability you have to look at paintings is dead in him. No matter who you are or how educated or religious you are, if you have not been regenerated, renewed, made over, brought to the light by the quickening revelation of the Holy Spirit, you cannot be intimate with God. You cannot know spiritual things at all. You can only know the history of spiritual things. Any enthusiasm you have for religion is in vain for it is only an illusion.

Spiritual Man

Paul says that we Christians who are quickened to life, are no longer estranged from God. We have been

released from the bondage of our past. We are free to move on into a passionately intimate relationship with God. There is nothing hindering us now.

Carnal Man

The carnal man is the immature Christian who does not go on or advance. He has slowed in his spiritual development or stopped altogether and is not controlled by the Holy Spirit, but rather by his own spirit. He continues without progress year after year, wandering spiritually. He swings on a pendulum back and forth or just wanders in circles, occasionally looking over his shoulder and remembering that he used to be a slave to evil. Then he goes to a prayer meeting or some revival, puts out his arms and moves so close to God that he can almost touch Him. But he is not going to push on into intimate relationship with God. To continue without progress year after year is to develop a sort of chronic heart disease. Your heart becomes harder and harder as time passes. That is, your heart becomes closed to any new things!

An Intense Christian

I was actually one of those very *intense* Christians, who avidly and faithfully served God and His church. Yet for decades I was wandering around in circles, hoping that each time I circled around, I would be a little bit closer to God. Then one day I was shocked out of my pew by the Spirit of God and realized that I needed to change my approach to God if ever I was to become the man of God

I so desperately desired to be. All of my former training proved to be useful in my journey and still is. But I wanted to see some grapes on my branch of the Vine.

Extensive Training

When after several months God revealed what was missing and how I could achieve this desire for God, I complained, “Why, God, did I have to waste 40 years of my life to get to this point?” He quickly quipped, “Are you better than Moses?” “No!” I replied. He revealed to me that day that Moses’ forty years in the desert of Midian were necessary preparation for the work God had for him to do. Then I remembered as well. Jesus spent thirty years in preparation for a three year ministry, while we spend three years in preparation for a thirty year ministry. So if you are thinking it is too late or you are too old, think again.

Better Late Than Never

Wouldn’t it be a great pleasure to you if you could give what is left of your life completely to God for His use? Is anyone too old to fall passionately in love? And to be sure there is a very misleading message floating around out there. “Give to God your best years, your youth.” I have discovered that my best years are my older and wiser ones. How much better to be wise and available than to be immature and to be available! Jump in! Start now! If you sincerely tell God you want to surrender your all to Him, He will, if you let Him, walk you through the course and bring you to an intimacy with Him that staggers your

imagination. “God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to His power which works within us.” Ephesians 3:20

Just Do It — Let God

So, if you have wasted many years or even decades, consider jumping in right now. But in order to do this, even your spouse must take second place behind God! The Israelites wandered for forty years until those children were grown to middle age and those women were dead. 40 years of it because the men had whimpered and said, “We can't go. It would cost us too much. We can't mistreat our families.” Today we say, “We have to be with our families on Sunday nights and Wednesday nights and all during the missionary convention. We have to be with our families. We can't take a chance of our children becoming juvenile delinquents or wandering from the path of the church we attend.”

Diffuse It Or Obey

Actually, in reality, the best way for a husband to save his family from a dull and fruitless religious experience is to show them an example of a man who loves God uncompromisingly. This is a man who remains intimate and true to God even though it costs his most significant others, his spouse, family and dear friends some consternation or aggravation. Every man who stands in the shadows and slanders those who pursue and live the deeper spiritual life, is slandering the very essence of the new birth. Even if you never choose to pursue a life

abandoned to intimacy with God, He will be with you. He will not destroy you. Rather, He will simply let you die as you are.

Aged Spiritual Infants — Tozer writes:

I refuse to be discouraged about anything. But it gives me a heavy heart to walk among Christians who have wandered for 40 years in the wilderness. Not going back to sin, but not going on into passionate intimacy with God, wandering in an aimless circle. Sometimes a little warmer, sometimes a little colder, sometimes a little holier and sometime is very unholy, but never going on.

Well-meaning But Misinformed

Beliefs, which were passed on to them from well-meaning and trusted people, have been acquired and embraced. These beliefs have unwittingly kept myriad Christians from living their best life in faith and love. They have not been taught that intimacy with God is even possible. Further they have been pushed away from God by their own guilt, shame and fear for not living the *holy* lives their parents taught them.

No, Not Even One

But, the absolute truth is, that there is no righteousness in them, except the perfect righteousness of Jesus, given to them with Salvation. Jesus paid it all. But as long as one believes that a sinless life must precede

intimacy with God, they can never become intimate. Guilt, shame and fear are the very emotions which keep us distant from anyone we love. This is especially true with God. *Intimacy* is the only thing that will produce a more and more holy life. When one becomes intimate with God, sin actually becomes repulsive. So until you deal with your guilt, shame and fear, it is almost certain that you will live and die a spiritual failure. This is a terrible waste.

Behavior Management

Behavior management requires control, either self control or other control. In rehab centers the world over are those who mandate behavior management. We are effective in getting the patient sober, but shortly after they are released, the stresses of life cause them to relapse. An experiment in Portugal in recent years has shown results that far exceed our rehabilitation centers in terms of sustained sobriety. Their statistics exceed all institutions of rehabilitation combined by 900 percent! Their experiment lays as its foundation the fact that it is loneliness that drives most people to their addictive substance, or sexual obsessions. The cure is not in one developing self-control. If that were true they never would have been addicted in the first place. The cure lies in developing healthy relationships.

Relationship — The Best Medicine

Instead of abandoning the released rehab patients, they are plugged into the community and given emotional

support and a way to make a respectable living. They are motivated by healthy relationships to live productive lives in community. This is what Christianity should look like. In the Christian way, salvation is the beginning point of the journey. At that moment God places the organs within which can “love” Him. But the pursuit of intimacy with God, must at some point cease to be striving to achieve it and begin to be relaxing in it. Even Christians who feel the loneliness of rejection in their community, fall prey to addictions of all sorts. The solution to addictive behaviors (sex, substance or service) is in the embrace of unconditional and supportive love. Tozer writes:

I’m glad God is good and kind. Failures can crawl into God's arms, relax and say, “Father, I made a mess of it. I’m a spiritual failure. I haven’t been out doing evil things exactly, but here I am Father, and I’m old and near the end of life and I’m a failure.”

Grace-Full

Our kind and *grace full* heavenly Father will not say to that person things like, “I don’t want to talk to you!” Or “I’m disappointed with you!” or “I am tired of your messy life!” As Graham Cooke put it so succinctly, “God is never disillusioned with me, because He never had any illusions about me in the first place. He knows that I am weak and foolish and have a history of messing up.” The individual has simply failed to reach his potential, at least spiritually. Even if thus far we have failed to reach our

potential, our destiny and our greatest success will be to develop a passionate intimacy with God. Paul, the man of God, wrote, “No other foundation can any man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” That foundation is His unconditional love! John 3:16-17

Inflammable

If you step back from your religion (bondage to its creeds) and consider the teachings of Jesus, it makes sense that virtually everything of substance can and will be burned up. However, the one thing you cannot burn is the spirit (relationships). Even when our loved ones die, we are still in relationship with them. So when we become intimate with God, His Spirit enables us to develop relationships with virtually anyone and everyone. As we love others like Jesus does, there is a strong chance that some will respond to His loving call to them into relationship with Him for themselves. And these relationships are the only thing that won't burn up. And spirit that has been redeemed by faith in the blood of Jesus, will never be burned up. And this is how we store up treasures in heaven.

Love Is A Choice

However, keep in mind that Jesus did not ever, nor did God ever, force anyone to believe in themselves let alone to be forced into a relationship with them. Actually, we cannot force relationship either. Unfortunately some Christians become so possessed with saving people from hell, that they try to force everyone around them to

become Christians. My own mother alienated herself and our entire family from her brother and sisters and their families by trying to force them to *get saved*. She even criticized their religions because she was so convinced of the way of her Christian denomination. Fortunately for me, God revealed Jesus' way of unconditional love so that I did not make that same mistake. To draw anyone to someone you love, in this case God, you must love them enough that they want to know and love the people you do, again in this case, God.

Blameless and Shameless

Thank God you are going to make it. But do you want to make it with God distant from you or would you rather be up close and intimately personal with Him? Are you tired of carrying guilt, shame and possibly fear? Are you tired of confusing sermons and lectures that keep you away from the love, joy and peace Jesus promised. It is the will of God that you should enter into the very Presence of God, commune constantly with His Holy Spirit, and do your business with His constant companionship. God relationships are never tiring. Actually the heart of man, in Christ, becomes the *temple (dwelling place) of the Holy Spirit*, like the ancient Holy of Holies in Israel.

In the Image of God

The *image of God* is like this. You can consider that our body is like the walls of the worship place, its structure. The mind is the outer court where we

contemplate God with our thoughts. The soul is the inner court or Holy Place, the seat of our emotions, where we develop affection for God and desire to have His presence within us. And the heart is the Holy of Holies of our being, into which we invite God, and surrender our wills to His. Our heart, *not our head*, makes emotional choices which create relationships.

Heart — Soul — Mind — Body

In *the image of God*, we have a *heart, soul, mind* and *body*. With the *heart* we make *choices*, our *will*. With the *soul* we feel and have love and all other *emotions*, our *compassion*. With the *mind*, we *think* of how to express our feelings toward, God, others and ourselves, our *rationale*. And with our *body*, we use our voice, body language and senses to *communicate* with other beings, our *expression*. So when we invite God into our *heart*, or *Holy of Holies*, and let Him make the choices for us, His compassion, His thoughts and His expressions (words or deeds) handle each situation we face. The beauty of this similitude to the creator is that, in union with Him, there is a meshing of our fabrics (spirits) into a *new creation*.

Fused Together with God

This understanding helped me realize that *new* does not mean that the *old* has to be gone. But take God's image (me) and mesh it with God Himself and the being becomes *new* when every aspect of my personhood

is fully bonded to the God fabric to which it has been meshed. Fiberglass becomes a *new* creation when liquid resin is meshed with soft but strong fabric. Both of the original substances are still present, but together they make a material from which myriad things can be fabricated, which could not have been made from either one by itself.

A New Purpose

Once we have been transformed into a *new creature* we are automatically *set apart* for a new purpose. And God has declared that we are as Holy as His Son and therefore fit to continue Jesus' work on earth. That is, we can now unconditionally love all people, and by that love, His love, compel them to want to be *made new* as well! This is the good news of the Gospel. This is not about religion. It is about relationship. (An interesting fact is that every religion has as its highest level, some kind of union with their creator. It is not about religion (bondage to creeds and traditions). It is about living loved by God and loving Him!