

# YOU CAN MEASURE YOUR LOVE FOR GOD!

By *Rodney W. Francis*

This book is dedicated to my wife Jean, and son Mark, and two sisters, Valerie and Joan. We have all been on quite a journey together . . . and it's not over yet! The best is yet to come!

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## ***Foreword***

A few years ago I spent some days with the Executive Council of the Elim Churches of New Zealand. It was then that I first really got to know Rodney Francis. My first impressions, during those intensive days of interaction, was that he was a man who was passionate about the things of God and strove for excellence in all that he did. Over the years as I have sat under his ministry in this country, as well as followed his work in the international scene, that impression has been reinforced.

In this book Rodney addresses a subject he is well qualified to speak on, because caring and compassion are hallmarks of his ministry. It is my opinion that the book will be found to be of value for two distinct reasons. The first is that it meets a specific need in getting to grips with instructing us on how to develop and measure our love, which should be the outstanding characteristic of every Christian's life. The second is that it reveals something of the pilgrimage of the author, allowing us to see that God can take a man from a place of obscurity and equip him for service which will lead him into an international ministry, bringing blessing to thousands. That in itself will be a source of inspiration to all who aspire to serve the Lord.

### ***T. Gordon Hills***

Field Superintendent

Elim Pentecostal Church of the United Kingdom.

*(Retired May, 2000).*

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**his book carries a message ~ a very important message ~ of one of the greatest truths we can ever experience, grow more in and impart on to others. It is also a bit of a ministry autobiography of some of the “happenings, experiences and lessons” I have encountered as I’ve sought to follow God’s leadings in my life. The two have been put together so as to help reveal more of the reality of God’s goodness to me and how the message of this book has shaped the major part of my life and ministry. This great message of the love of God shown to us in the Scriptures is just as relevant and powerful as it ever was. It is still the great challenge of my life and ministry. People everywhere cannot be effectively ministered to through Bible knowledge alone; they must be drawn and impacted by the love of God working in and through us who call ourselves by the name of Christ (Christian). **“The Word”** (Jesus) must become **“flesh”** (John 1:14) in us and then flow out of us in that LOVE of the Father which Jesus came to declare and demonstrate to us. Without His love working in and through us we are unable to demonstrate to our generation the true ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Through His love alive in us we can and do influence people for good and for God.

My prayer is that the Holy Spirit will speak His truth - the truth of the Word of God ~ into your life as you read this book. May the message impact you to rise higher in Him than you’ve ever gone before! ~ *Rodney W. Francis.*

## YOU CAN MEASURE YOUR LOVE FOR GOD!

**Scripture Quote at front of the book:**

***“I have loved you even as the Father has loved Me. Live within My love. When you obey Me you are living in My love, just as I obey My Father and live in His love. I have told you this so that you will be filled with My joy. Yes, your cup of joy will overflow! I demand that you love each other as much as I love you. And here is how to measure it ~ the greatest love is shown when a person lays down his life for his friends, and you are My friends if you obey Me”*** (John 15:9-14, TLB).

### [Chapter 1](#)

## LIFE'S MEASURE: WE REAP WHAT WE SOW

In an age when it is important for many to be able to measure their success in education, sport, business, family, personal achievement, etc., it is quite amazing that what I am about to share with you in this book has not been emphasized more than it has.

If someone walked up to you today and asked the question:

- \* **“How much do you love God?”** what would your answer be?
- \* **On what basis would you be able to qualify your answer?**
- \* **Is there actually a way that you can honestly measure your love for God?**

For the answer to these questions we have to look to the Bible. It is the only true authoritative writing that we have to know what God is like, and what He has said on any given subject by which we may (know Him).

There is a Biblical principle ~ mirrored in life ~ that *“we reap what we sow”*:

*“Don’t be misled; remember that you can’t ignore God and get away with it: a man will always reap just the kind of crop he sows! If he sows to please his own wrong desires, he will be planting seeds of evil and he will surely reap a harvest of spiritual decay and death; but if he plants the good things of the Spirit, he will reap the everlasting life which the Holy Spirit gives him. And let us not get tired of doing what is right, for after a while we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t get discouraged and give up. That’s why whenever we can we should always be kind to everyone, and especially to our Christian brothers”* (Galatians 6:7-10, TLB).

Within this principle of sowing and reaping we have two main choices. We can sow to that which is right or to that which is wrong. To the spirit or to the flesh. We do the sowing; not God. His sowing was the sowing of the Word of God into our hearts (1 Peter 1:23). Our sowing is by what we do with that “seed” of the Word. We choose whether to sow love, kindness, friendliness, forgiveness, etc., or we choose to sow isolation, rejection, hate, anger, unforgiveness, and so on.

Every day we make decisions on how we will sow with our lives. The challenge for us is to share real love from out of our heart, to touch the lives of others.

**\* If we sow love, we will reap love.**

In Judges 1:3-7 we read of the confession of one King Adoni-bezek who admitted to having reaped what he had sown. When captured by the army of Judah they cut off his thumbs and big toes! Not a very nice thing to do. But earlier this cruel king had done exactly that to others! You’ve heard of a “toothless lion,” but here we read of a “toe-less king” who reaped what he had sown.

**\* If we sow hurt, we will reap hurt.**

In the Book of Esther we read of an evil man by the name of Haman. Jealous of the righteous

Mordecai he plotted against him. Jealousy moved him to reject Mordecai. He had a gallows built to have Mordecai hanged thereon. However, before Haman could carry out his evil plan to remove Mordecai, a political change saw Haman hanged on the very same gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. He reaped what he sowed!

**\* If we sow rejection, we will reap rejection.**

Jesus taught us: *“Give, and [gifts] will be given you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over will they pour into [the pouch formed by] the bosom [of your robe and used as a bag]. For with the measure you deal out ~ that is, with the measure you use when you confer benefits on others ~ it will be measured back to you”* (Luke 6:38, AMP.)

Here we are told that the same measure which we give out from ourselves will be given back to us. That is the *“reaping what you sow”* principle.

A “measure” is “1. the extent, quantity, amount, or degree of something, as determined by measurement or calculation. 2. a device for measuring distance, volume, etc., such as a graduated scale or container. 3. a system of measurement. 4. a standard used in a system of measurements. 5. a specific or standard amount of something. 6. a basis or standard for comparison” (Collins).

This principle of *“reaping what you sow”* is a measure by which we may know where we stand on the major issues of life. God has told us we are able to measure ourselves. That is, we can compare where we are in relation to a prescribed standard, which is according to the same measure that we give out to others. Therefore, I say, we can measure our love for God.

**\* How much do you love God?**

Let us look at one other translation of Luke 6:38 before we move on:

*“For if you give, you will get! Your gift will return to you in full and overflowing measure, pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, and running over. Whatever measure you use to give ~ large or small ~ will be used to measure what is given back to you”* (TLB).

We set the standard, the returns, by what we initially do. We must first sow the seed of our need (i.e. finance, love, acceptance, forgiveness). If we wait for another person to make the first move it may never happen! You may waste years of your life expecting something to happen that never will. Be prepared to make the first move.

I remember the time that I was called to the house of a man who had served many years in positions of church leaderships, mostly as an elder. For 27 years he had “held things” against me because I had been given a position in a church that he felt should have been given to him. I knew nothing of this. I did not know that he felt that way toward me. As a result, the way he felt had no effect upon me at all. I had got on with my life. He had “stewed on the inside” for 27 years. His confession was that he had wasted all of those years. It had robbed him of a fruitful life and ministry and now, in later life, he was struggling with even the basic Christian truths of peace, acceptance, etc. How tragic! He asked for my forgiveness, which I was willing to give. What a lesson we can learn from this. He reaped what he sowed (quite possibly in ignorance). If he had given the matter to God all those years back ~ if he had left it on God’s altar ~ his life

would have turned out much better. He should have measured his feelings and actions by the Word of God. He would have enjoyed 27 years of a better quality of living instead of 27 years of bitterness.

**\* True love for God makes us deal with our love for people.**

Positively!

Here's another verse that brings forth this principle of "*reaping what we sow*":

*"But remember this ~ if you give little, you will get little. A farmer who plants just a few seeds will get only a small crop, but if he plants much, he will reap much. Every one must make up his own mind as to how much he should give. Don't force anyone to give more than he really wants to, for cheerful givers are the ones God prizes. God is able to make it up to you by giving you everything you need and more, so that there will not only be enough for your own needs, but plenty left over to give joyfully to others. It is as the Scriptures say: 'The godly man gives generously to the poor. His good deeds will be an honour to him forever.'*

*For God, Who gives seed to the farmer to plant, and later on, good crops to harvest and eat, will give you more and more seed to plant and will make it grow so that you can give away more and more fruit from your harvest.*

*Yes, God will give you much so that you can give away much, and when we take your gifts to those who need them they will break out into thanksgiving and praise to God for your help. So, two good things happen as a result of your gifts ~ those in need are helped, and they overflow with thanks to God. Those you help will be glad not only because of your generous gifts to themselves and to others, but they will praise God for this proof that your deeds are as good as your doctrine. And they will pray for you with deep fervour and feeling because of the wonderful grace of God shown through you. Thank God for His Son ~ His Gift too wonderful for words" (2 Corinthians 9:6-15, TLB).*

While this verse is primarily talking of the Christian's responsibility in the giving of our finances, it is nonetheless a Biblical principle which can be applied in all areas of life. **We set the standard by what we give and do. Whatever measure we apply in our giving is the measure by which our return is measured. If we sow sparingly we reap sparingly. If we sow bountifully we reap bountifully.**

Think of this principle in terms of measuring our love for God.

Now, ask yourself: "Is there actually a way that we can honestly measure our love for God?"

## Chapter 2

### **SOME BACKGROUND AND PERSONAL TESTIMONY**

**O**f all the subjects contained in the Bible, the message of the love of God has to be the most used and abused one of all. Far too often we have not stopped to consider exactly what the Scriptures have to say about love and love's conditions.



But before we go further in the measuring of our love for God, let me share with you a little of my own testimony. This will help you to understand where I am coming from and how God has dealt with me personally on learning how to love.

I was brought up on a dairy farm at Tiakitahuna, a very small community seven miles south of Palmerston North in the Manawatu Province of the North Island of New Zealand. My parents were very good to my two sisters (Valerie and Joan) and myself. We were (and still are) a close family. Our parents loved us and wanted the best for us. At this time of writing my mother (Nola) is still alive, living with Joan in Hamilton, New Zealand. Valerie now lives in Masterton, and has been a faithful worker in “The Gospel Faith Messenger” Ministry for many years.

Dad (Walter John Francis) went home to be with the Lord in April, 1992. Yet in spite of the security of a good, happy upbringing and home-life, I dropped out of high school one week before I was to sit my School Certificate examination. This happened because I saw myself as being a failure and believed that I would fail the examination. Rather than face failure I left school to work on the family farm. At that time I had no sense of direction as to what I really wanted to do with my life. I settled for farming but, in all honesty, my heart was not in it.

As a family we had always attended a Presbyterian Church.

When I was 17 some cousins of mine invited me to a Pentecostal Church in Palmerston North. I accepted the invitation. But it was a huge culture shock to me! So much so that I said I would not go back again, especially as *the service went on for more than an hour!*

A period of months passed before I found myself back at that Pentecostal Church: “The Open Door Mission” in Cuba Street, Palmerston North. On about my third visit, the preacher was an old grey-headed (but very fiery) Pentecostal preacher from Wanganui, New Zealand. His name was Albert Hague. That night his preaching literally “scared the hell” out of me and I found myself responding to an altar call at the front of that little church, giving my life to Jesus. I felt a great load lift off my life. I felt like a bird that had been let out of a small cage. I felt clean and happy. A new life had begun for me.

A few months later I travelled away with a rugby football sports team (New Zealand’s national game). On that trip the rest of the team discovered I was a Christian. They let me know that they did not like Christians and I did not appreciate being the centre of their vented negative criticism of Christianity. The result was, I decided to give Jesus “a miss,” thinking that if Christianity brought that sort of re-action, I could live without it. Unfortunately that meant backsliding. Turning my heart away from Jesus Whom I had come to love as my Saviour just a few months previously. But backslide I did, for a period of approximately six months. That six-month period of my life has proven to be the most miserable of my entire life. The peace and the joy of sins forgiven that I had found in Jesus I had now forsaken. I became jealous of others who seemed happy and became critical of everyone. Worse still, I blamed God for my misery ~ and told Him so too! I can still see myself shaking my fist at God, swearing and cursing Him for making my life a total misery. (I don’t think I frightened Him one little bit.) How glad I am that He is a merciful God!

One Sunday afternoon in 1960, soon after my 18th birthday (while I was still in a backslidden state), my mother ~ who by now was a regular attender at “The Open Door Mission” ~ came into my bedroom and told me that Albert Hague, the man whose ministry had so impacted my life, had died that day. All sorts of excuses came out of my mouth, like “So what?” “I’m not interested anymore”. “What’s that got to do with me?” and so on. She gently replied, “I just think you ought to know,” and left me alone in my room. As I stood there alone I suddenly became aware of the fact that whether I liked it or not, I was somehow connected to that man. He was my spiritual father! Even though I was hardened in my heart and had backslidden away from God, in the next few moments I had these words clearly impressed in my spirit: **“Someone has to take his place.”** It was so clear it could have been an audible voice. From that moment the love of God began melting my hardened heart and, though very backslidden, I knew God was calling me into the ministry! The power of that impressed word turned my life around. In my heart I recommitted my life to God, went back to church that same night and I fell in love with Jesus afresh. I have been seeking to serve God ever since.

The change was wonderful. I became motivated by a hunger to know God and His Word. Because of my fear of failure, inferiorities, insecurities, inhibitions, self-consciousness, and an acute lack of education, I knew that if I was called of God to the ministry He would have to do something mightily in me for it to become a reality.

**“Someone has to take his place!”**

I knew that **someone** was **me!**

But I also knew that for the call to become a reality, I would have to have more power in my life; enough to overcome the negatives that were there.

Now back in church, I was challenged with the need to be baptized in water. My hunger for God was such that I wanted everything He had for me. The Scriptures confirmed that I needed to be water baptized and so it was arranged. I was baptized in a portable tank, constructed of a galvanized piping framework with a canvas bag sewn around it. I remember standing in that tank with Pastor Clarrie Hunt. My arms were folded across my chest, my eyes were closed and I was praying a prayer of full surrender to God’s will: “Have Your own way in my life, Lord.” Unfortunately for me the Pastor had me standing in the wrong place and in the next few moments the back of my head connected with the galvanized piping with a mighty whack! It hit so hard that very quickly a lump the size of a golf ball came up on the back of my boney head. To this day I still think that I heard the people gathered there saying among themselves, “God is trying to knock some sense into this young man!”

The Pastor was very embarrassed and full of apologies for what had happened. But I fixed him real good . . . Do you know what I did to him?

I married his daughter!

After water baptism I was told about the experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the power of Pentecost. Now I knew I needed more power in my life, so I allowed people to pray for me to receive this baptism. However, every time people prayed for me there would rise up inside of me all of those fears, insecurities, self-consciousness, etc., so that I could not get released. I don’t know how many times I was prayed for without success, but I know I got discouraged and began to think that maybe the baptism in the Holy Spirit was not God’s will for me.



A little time after that my mother brought into our home an old Pentecostal lady friend from out of town. I remember mother introducing us:

“Sister, this is my son, Rodney; Rodney, this is Sister . . .”

“Hello, Rodney.”

“Hello, Sister.”

And then, the next moment, I was startled by that little old lady as she poked her finger in my face and asked, “Young man, have you given your heart to Jesus?”

Wow, I wasn’t expecting that!

“Yes,” I replied.

Again she came at me, “Young man, have you been baptized in water?”

Wow again!

“Yes!”

The third time she came at me, “Young man, have you been baptized in the Holy Spirit?” (She always seemed to call me, “Young Man”).

Another Wow, with an added gulp!

I replied, “I’m seeking.”

But that was not the right answer for her. In the next few moments, she had me sitting on a chair praying for me to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. She hadn’t even been in our home five minutes!

There she was, hands on my head, praying for God to “fill this young man.”

Again, all my fears, insecurities and inferiorities came flooding to the surface, except this time it was the fear of woman rather than the fear of man! She was not one to give up easily, and I couldn’t escape. I was getting a good Pentecostal “scalp massage” as she was praying for me with the laying on of hands, loosing and binding, calling out, “Fill him, Lord,” and other words like that.

After some time she began to realize she was not winning ~ and I knew I wasn’t! So she changed tack a little and encouraged me to “Speak the first thing that comes into your mind.”

At that point my mind was quite blank!

“Take a big step of faith. Speak it out, Brother!”

On and on it went.

Finally I decided to “speak it out.” I plucked up courage and, by faith, I opened my mouth and spoke out.

I couldn’t believe what I said!

I heard myself saying in a loud voice: “George! George!”

To this day I don’t know who George was, is, or ever will be!

When I realized what I had said, I was so embarrassed that I wrenched myself free of that dear old lady’s clutches and ran out of the house, vowing no one would ever lay hands on me again to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. And they never did!

But the need for power and the hunger for more of God would not go away. I had to have more if I was to ever be in the ministry.

It was not long after this that God met me in a sovereign way. It was about 5:30 a.m. one morning as I was rounding up the cows on the farm for milking. Out there in the darkness the Holy Spirit suddenly came upon me and the next thing I knew this new language was pouring

out of my mouth. It was so fluent, as though I had been speaking it all of my life. The presence of God surrounded me and I lost consciousness of time. There were no fears, insecurities or self-consciousness problems this time. And, likewise, there were no other people around, so the fear of man did not hinder me. I did not suffer from the fear of cows ~ and they did not seem to mind what was happening - so there were no hindrances to my receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit early that morning. I do not know how long this experience went on for, but I do know that when I stopped speaking in tongues, for the second time in my life I very clearly heard the voice of God speaking to me. This is what I heard:

***“I am raising you up to be a preacher of the Gospel and, as My sign to you that I am raising you up, I am going to open doors for you to preach straightaway.”***

That is exactly what happened.

Within a very short time I was involved in an outreach at a Maori Marae (meeting place) not far from Foxton, 25 miles south of Palmerston North. There we saw the Holy Spirit poured out in a wonderful way upon numbers of people. It all started when Pastor Hunt prayed for a little two-year-old boy with a badly deformed club foot. At the end of his prayer the foot was as normal as the other. God had done a miracle. That healing was a permanent miracle and the boy grew up to play rugby football. Praise the Lord! People came from all around the area bringing their sick families and friends. Healings of all kinds took place. Numbers were saved and a church was planted.

Even though I had now received my ***“power from on high”*** experience (Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:8), I still faced my own personal inadequacies of which the enemy was for ever reminding me. The fear of man especially, was a “biggy” for me to overcome.

Ask yourself these questions right now:

- \* **What sort of person would you be if you were not afraid of anyone?**
- \* **Would your life be any different to what it is now?**
- \* **If you do recognize that there is a fear of any sort in your life, what are you doing to rid yourself of it?**
- \* **Are you going to let fear dictate to you for the rest of your life?**
- \* **Do you know God’s answer to fear?”**

**Fear dogged me. It cost me dearly when attempting to respond to what God wanted me to do. I was a Christian preacher for 16 years before I was to discover the key that set me free from living in the fear of man.**

But in those early days of my walk with God it was a real nuisance! In fact that fear kept me from exercising the gift of prophecy for six years!

Not long after my experience among the cows, the Holy Spirit spoke to me again:

***“If you will get to know My voice and will do what I ask you, there is nowhere in this world that you and I together cannot go and not be successful.”***

That word has given me the focus for my ministry, which I have endeavoured to follow over many years now. I have not always been as obedient as I would have liked. However, I can say

I've enjoyed a wonderful walk with the Holy Spirit as I have learned to know His voice. Knowing His voice has more than made-up for my lack of a higher education or formal Bible School training which I have not been privileged to.

While I was still 18 there was a combined Pentecostal Convention (today they are called Conferences) in Palmerston North. There were about six co-operating churches, which was good back in those days. Being one who loved to be in the meetings, I was rushing through my farm work so as to be able to attend the day-time meetings. As I was doing that, the Holy Spirit spoke to me and said:

***“You don't need to be in those meetings today. Why don't you spend the day with Me down by the river?”***

Our farm backed on to the Manawatu River, and with that voice came the desire to want to go and spend the day with God down by the river. I took my Bible with me and spent the next five hours having a wonderful prayer time and reading the Bible. While I was there the Holy Spirit directed me to Ephesians 6:10-20 about putting on the whole armour of God. Then He said to me:

***“I want you to speak this message at the Convention tonight!”***

“What?!!”

I began to argue with God.

“Lord! No one knows I'm down here by the river. Who am I? I'm just an 18-year-old upstart!”

After my initial re-action I settled down and said, “Lord, if this is really You, then You are going to have to cause the Pastor in charge of the Convention to say these exact words to me tonight: ‘Rodney, do you have a word from God for this meeting tonight?’”

I thought that would fix it.

My mind told me that could never happen.

At milking time I went home, did my work, got cleaned up and headed for the evening Convention meeting.

I felt full of Jesus! (We cannot spend time with God and not receive the benefits.) By the time I reached the Convention I had kind of dismissed the idea of my “fleece” being answered.

But that did not last for long.

As I walked inside the meeting place I saw the Pastor in charge way across the other side of the big hall. He saw me walk in and immediately started walking directly toward me. My spirit began pounding within me. I knew what was going to happen. And it did! He walked straight up to me and said: “Rodney, do you have a word from God for this meeting tonight?”

I was floored!

This had to be the Holy Spirit. But because I could now see numbers of people gathering for the meeting, the fear of man began to rise and tell me I couldn't do it. Yet I could not deny that the Lord had answered me exactly word for word! So I had to say, “Yes.”

That night I preached my heart out on the armour of God from Ephesians 6. At the end of it I gave an altar call. As far as I can recollect that was most likely the first public altar call I had ever given. My first call was for salvation. Among others, several Salvation Army people in uniform responded. When I saw them there I tried to explain to them that it was a call for salvation and they needed to sit down. They burst into tears, saying: “We want to get saved.” That confused me as I naturally thought they would have already been saved. So I called for the Pastors present to come and take over, while I went to sit down over on the far side on the front

row. A general call was given for other needs and numbers responded. Among them were two brothers who came to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Six Pastors spent time praying for them. It was like they prayed, and prayed, and prayed. But nothing was happening. One by one the Pastors went to sit down. Then the Holy Spirit spoke to me:

***“Go and put your hands on that one’s head.”***

It happened to be the man furthest away from me. At that moment I had a huge argument with the Holy Spirit: “Lord! If those six Pastors can pray and nothing happened, what will they think of me if I go across (in front of all the people) and start praying for that man they have already given up on?”

I didn’t want to go.

The anointing increased on me in such a way that I began to literally bounce up and down on the chair! It was so embarrassing that I couldn’t sit still. So finally I obeyed, and walked across the front of that meeting and put my hands on that one man’s head. When I did that the power of God hit him. He shot forward out of his seat, landed on his knees on a hard wooden floor three or four feet away from his chair. As his knees hit the floor his hands shot up in the air and he began speaking in tongues under the power of the Holy Spirit. That was all I was told to do, but what a lesson I learned. The Lord was showing me that we could do things together and be successful. The secret is to listen to His voice. How adventurous life and ministry is when we get to know God’s voice.

Another experience that greatly impacted my life back then was in an evangelistic tent crusade at a little, isolated place called Tuai, 30 miles inland from Wairoa in the North Island of New Zealand. People had come from miles around and God was at work. On that particular Marae there was no electricity. A motorised generator was being used to supply lighting for the meetings in the large tent (used by Evangelist Ian Hunt, Jean’s brother). How precious it was, night after night, to see scores of forestry workers and others walking those aisles to the front of the tent to give their lives to Jesus. It was mighty. Individuals and families were changed forever! One night, after the meeting was over and everyone was in their bed, the Holy Spirit began waking us up and drawing us into the tent. I was one of them. There I was, with a coat over my pyjamas, standing in the big tent watching numbers of others, also in their pyjamas and coats, worshipping God with raised hands in the darkness of the night. As we were doing that the next thing, what can only be described as a supernatural light, came into that place.

It was an awesome experience, even heavenly!

What I would say was the glory of God lit up the whole tent and I could see people clearly. The generator was not running. We were being bathed in a supernatural light. All over the tent I saw people touched by the glory of God. It impacted those present in such a way that they fell face forward on to the sawdust covered ground. The moment their faces hit the ground they were sovereignly filled with the Holy Spirit! We all knew God was in the place! I have never forgotten that night, and don’t think I ever will. It gave me some idea of what I imagine heaven to be like. And I experienced it!

I find it interesting that among those present in that Convention were five young men who have gone on to impact countless numbers of lives in New Zealand and around the world. All are still alive. They are Peter Morrow, Ian Bilby, Alister Lowe, Peter Hira and myself.

By that time I was sweet on the Pastor’s daughter, Jean Hunt. Jean had been playing the music in

the tent meetings and so I did not get to see much of her. Even before I really met her, the Lord had shown me that she would be my wife and we would serve Him together in the ministry. Jean, on the other hand, only desired to be married to a man who was “sold out for God.” She had been through a deep valley experience prior to my meeting her. A young man had been courting her and it looked as though that was where her future lay. However he was diagnosed as having cancer and he died a few months later. One of the big heart-aches in Jean’s life at that time, together with the loss of one she loved dearly, was the way that some people prophesied that the man would be healed and together they would serve God on the mission field. Prophecies like that can be very damaging and accountability is needed in such times. Jean and I have served on the mission fields together, but the prophecies were not given for anyone else other than the man dying with cancer and to Jean. How we need to be careful and wise when we prophesy! What we say has an effect upon the persons and situations concerned.

We were married on September 22nd, 1962, and have served God together all of our married life. I jokingly tell people I waited until I was 20 to get married, as that was my age. But because we knew God’s call on our lives we had faith to believe that it would work out right. And it has. We have had a wonderful journey together with the Lord and today find ourselves in a place where we are free to go anywhere in the world that He wants us to. God is good!

I left the farm the day I got married. We went away on our honeymoon without me having a job to go to; but I knew in my heart I was going to be a postman. However, when I applied for that job they laughed at me, telling me that there was a waiting list “a mile long.” My name was added to it, and off we went. On our arrival back in Palmerston North I went again to the Post Office to apply for my postman’s job. Again they started explaining to me about the waiting list, no vacancies, etc., when into the office where I was walked the manager of the Postmen’s Branch. They introduced me to him and told him I was looking for a job. He replied that he happened to be looking for a postman right away and took me down to look over the Postmen’s Branch. The upshot of that was that I started work the very next day. They told me I would go a long way in the Post Office. They just never said it would be on a bicycle!

I took to that job like “a duck to water.” Coming off the farm, I was physically fit and so the up-to-100 miles per six-day week on the bicycle did not bother me one little bit. There I mixed with people from around the world. It was good for me to get to know the different nationalities, their religious beliefs, cultures, and so on. I took my stand for Jesus from Day One and soon found out that, after an initial season of persecution and mocking, they came to respect me for my stand. They knew there were a number of other religions and various Christian denominations represented in the work force, but none took their stand for what they believed as I did. One or two took their opposition to my Jesus a bit further than verbal abuse. On one occasion I had my shins kicked very hard by a woman of another religion (Jehovah’s Witness), and on another, a cigarette was stubbed out behind my knee (that hurt!) by an Anglican woman. But I also made sure that I laughed with them and joined in on things that did not compromise my Christian stance.

While in the Post Office I had the joy of leading about four of them to the Lord. One Christmas I was invited to hold a church service in the Postmen’s Branch. That was a real challenge, but I did it. While the sorters were working I preached to them about Moses putting the serpent on the



pole, and about those who looked upon it and were healed; then bringing it through to Jesus on the Cross and how we must look to Him to be saved (Numbers 21:8-9; John 3:14-17). That afternoon I was rostered to work. I wondered what kind of a reception I would get. On arrival at my work place I discovered my job had been done for me and a note of appreciation was on my desk!

On another occasion during a Christmas mail rush, as I was working a young man who was a Christian but who could not comprehend the baptism in the Holy Spirit suddenly blurted out for all to hear: "I don't believe all this Holy Spirit rubbish, Rodney!" He took me somewhat by surprise. I calmly put my letters down and turned to him, telling him I would share with him what I had personally seen and experienced of the Holy Spirit in my own life. I made sure that my reply to him was loud enough so all who heard him blurt out could hear what I had to say. As I began sharing my heart and experiences I became aware that more and more of the workers were stopping work and gathering around us. Before long there was a crowd of people packed into that corner of the Postmen's Branch listening to me share on my experiences of the Holy Spirit. The impact was tremendous. They felt something of the reality of God that day. After that the non-saved manager, of his own volition, asked me if I would counsel any staff that needed help. He provided me with my own counselling room, as well as the people to counsel.

Throughout the time I worked at the Post Office I was able to establish "The Gospel Faith Messenger" Ministry and to travel and minister around New Zealand and overseas. They would give me "leave without pay" to do that when my holiday time was spent. God really used that place to prepare me for what He had ahead.

Footnote. A few years later I met up again with that man who had blurted out his unbelief. This time he was all smiles and one of the first things he told me was that he had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and now understood what I had talked about back there.

### Chapter 3 **"THE GFM" IS BORN**

**I**t was during my time while working at the Post Office that "The Gospel Faith Messenger" Literature Ministry was born. At a local Convention held at Foxton a group of Maori people from the Urewera Country (in the heart of the North Island) approached me about the possibility of putting Bible Studies onto paper and sending them through the post to those who did not have access to good church fellowship services "like we did in the cities." My confidence ~ or lack of it ~ was such that I turned them down flat. I felt that was a job for someone else, more knowledgeable and qualified to teach the Bible than myself. At the next Convention they approached me again, and, rather than turning them down flat, I challenged them to provide me with the names and addresses of those who would like to receive such studies. They came back to me with 27 names and addresses! I went home and put together a very basic Bible Study and, from that time, "The GFM" was born. That was in April, 1964.

I had not been going very long on those Bible Studies when a minister friend whom I held in high regard, took issue with me and told me, "This ministry is only your own idea and, the sooner it ceases, the better." It was like a knife had been plunged into my heart. I cried out to



God to confirm whether establishing “The GFM” was His will or simply my own effort. “If this is of You, Lord, please confirm by sending in more new names and addresses than we’ve ever received since we began this work.”

Three days later I received a fat envelope in the mail full of new names and addresses to receive the Bible Studies. With it came the peace of God into my heart ~ I knew God wanted me to continue. How grateful to God I am that we did continue. Over the years we’ve ministered to hundreds of thousands of people in over 110 nations. Scores have been saved, healed and delivered through the literature, cassettes and videos that have been produced. From nation after nation we have received letters and information telling of powerful miraculous salvation’s, healings and happenings as people have called out to God in their distress after reading a Gospel tract, answering a Bible Lesson, reading a book or manual, listening to a tape or watching a video. The Holy Spirit has been there with them and answered their cry. “The GFM” continues today, touching multitudes through the various arms of its ministry.

I remember on one of my trips to Vanuatu (in the South Pacific) of going to a place called Luganville. I had never been there before and no one was expecting me. I met a Christian brother on the street who wanted to take me to meet some of his Christian friends. When I walked into their home, they were sitting around the darkened room watching a video. **It was me preaching on video!!** What a huge surprise for me ~ and them. They were amazed at the man on the video walking into their home in person!

One section of “The GFM” actually started from an occasion when I was still working at the Post Office. A fellow Christian at work received a Christian magazine in the post (personally addressed to her). Without even opening it she threw it straight into the rubbish bin. As she did that the Holy Spirit said to me: **“I can use that.”** Immediately I saw possibilities of what could be done with “unwanted” Christian literature lying in Christian homes if I could get it sent to us. I picked up that magazine out of the trash can, took it home and began a used Christian literature re-distribution ministry. We let it be known that we wanted to receive any unwanted Christian books, magazines, etc., which we would then post on to needy areas of the world. It worked.

One remarkable testimony of God using second-hand Christian literature came from Kenya in Africa. A Prison Chaplain wrote to us requesting that we help him to minister to the 1,000 inmates under his spiritual care. We began sending him parcels of used literature, as well as the Bible Correspondence Courses which we had developed. After several months we received another letter thanking us for the literature. The Chaplain testified of his joy in leading 372 prisoners to personal faith in Jesus Christ, helped greatly by our gift. The power of Gospel literature was at work in that prison. The prison started its own re-distribution ministry with the recycled literature we had sent to them. They would hand it out to the prisoners with express instructions not to damage or destroy it. After reading it they were to pass it on to other inmates. Then, when all had read it, it was gathered up and sent on to other prisons around Kenya to be read yet again!

Then came the time when a letter arrived asking for specific prayer. The Chaplain had been told he was being transferred to another prison. He asked us to pray that God would provide the right Chaplain to replace him so that the literature ministry could continue in that prison, and in the

prisons where they sent it on to. God really answered those prayers. News came through of a wonderful thing that had happened. An unheard of appointment was made. One of the prisoners, whose life was powerfully saved and transformed through receiving "The GFM" literature, was actually promoted from inmate to Prison Chaplain! That meant the ministry continued on in the prisons and the first Chaplain went to a new prison where he introduced the literature to the inmates there.

Before the cost of postage became too prohibitive for us over four tons of recycled Christian literature was salvaged to minister again and again to countless thousands of people in nations around the world. Only eternity will reveal the full impact of Gospel literature.

Our experience shows that literature is much, much more powerful and effective than most Christians realize. To me, it is sad that the Christian Church does not invest more heavily into good Gospel literature. If we are really genuine in our desire to see the lost won to Christ, we must realize that Gospel literature is one of the most powerful weapons we have. Unless destroyed, it remains to minister again and again. We have received scores of testimonies as a result of "The GFM" literature. People have been saved from sin, suicide and the occult directly because of it. Countless others have been blessed, encouraged, healed, restored to God . . . the list is almost endless.

How powerful is Gospel literature?

So powerful that the mighty Holy Spirit works through it to speak directly to the hearts of the readers. We get responses to literature sent out over 20 years previous.

Think about that!

There are many, many stories of lives transformed through "The GFM" literature ministry.

One is that of a man in the Fiji Islands who regularly travelled five miles from Vatuakoula to Tavua each Sunday just to receive a Gospel tract from the open-air preachers (using tracts supplied by "The GFM"). He had this strange idea of wanting to see how high he could "grow" the stack of Gospel tracts one on top of the other before the pile would fall over. He had never read any at that point. The day finally came when that one last tract caused the pile to topple over onto the floor. As he was picking up the scattered tracts he paused to read one of them. Then another . . . and the Holy Spirit convicted him of his sin. Right then and there he cried out to God to save him, which He did. That man so grew in his new-found faith in Jesus Christ he went on to become a full-time minister of the Gospel.

Another story is that of the son of a witchdoctor in one of the African nations. He kept one of our Gospel tracts under his pillow as a good luck charm to ward off the evil spirits stirred up by his father. According to his testimony he had never read the message, until one night when things were especially bad from his father's incantations. In fear he cried out to God, read the tract and yielded his heart to Jesus. He wrote to us and told us the story and how he now had peace in his heart. We sent him our Bible Lessons which he answered. Then he requested that we send a Bible Lesson to his witchdoctor father!

Guess what?

The witchdoctor father responded and filled out the answers. He knew he desperately needed peace and deliverance from his evil ways. Again the Holy Spirit was on hand to answer the father's cry. He became a Christian and renounced his occultic life-style. Isn't God good!

One especially touching testimony is that of a man whose life became so desperate he thought the only way out was suicide. He decided to end his life with a knife down by a river. As he was approaching the river, his mind in absolute turmoil, his attention was drawn to a leaflet caught in a bush close to the river. On looking closer he discovered that it was one of our Gospel tracts entitled "Make Contact With Jesus!" What better message could anyone get at such a time? He began to read the tract, broke down and wept his way to God in sincere repentance. He thought there was no way out, but the Holy Spirit showed him the way up! How glad I am that I had taken the time to put pen to paper, then believed enough in what I had written to get it printed and sent around the world! At this time of writing I have not as yet physically set foot on any African soil. But there are thousands of converts throughout that great continent. Many influenced by Gospel literature I've written and produced. My heart rejoices and I can honestly say: "Praise the Lord for His goodness!"

A few years ago we received a letter from Suva, Fiji Islands, telling how a young man had been praying for over two years for a Bible Correspondence Course. He did not know where to get information on such a Course. Then, one day as he was walking down one of Suva's city streets, a piece of paper came blowing down the street and wrapped itself around the young man's leg. When he pulled it off and looked at it, he realized it was a Bible Correspondence Course Lesson ~ the very thing he had been praying for! He took it home, answered it and enrolled in our Courses. God surely works to answer the real heart cry of people!

That testimony of the Bible Lesson blowing down the street and wrapping itself around a young man's leg in answer to simple, heart-believing prayer reminded me of another occasion when God answered the heart cry of a young Christian. She had received a copy of one of our "GFM" magazines on Pentecost Island, Vanuatu. When she saw my photo in it, she laid her hand on it and started praying, "Lord, You send that man to this island!" At the time she was 16 years old. The fact that no white minister of the Gospel had visited her village in 24 years made no difference to her faith. She prayed and believed for God to send me to her village. I of course knew nothing of this. Yet three years later, Pastor Harvey Walker (Tauranga, New Zealand) and I walked into that village to share Jesus with the people. The young lady did not realize (at that point) that her prayer had been answered by God. Amazingly, in the very first meeting, I got a word of knowledge for the young lady that she was a woman of faith and God was calling her into the work of an evangelist, and that she was to be released into it straightaway. Later, when we started handing out some of "The GFM" literature, the young lady suddenly realized that I was the man she had been asking God for three years to send to her village! What an exciting moment it was for her ~ and me! God had miraculously answered her prayers and sent us to bless them in the name of the Lord. What a lesson to learn! God is interested in answering the simplest of prayers. God honoured that young lady's faith.

At that point Harvey and I were the first white ministers to visit there in 27 years. Harvey (a very good friend for many years) and I saw a visitation of God come in that place. It was awesome as night after night, day after day, people came and were impacted by the Holy Spirit. Things happened there that Harvey and I will never forget. People were sovereignly drawn to the meetings; some who never attended later came confessing to different sins and disobedience toward God. Scores came to Christ and many were filled with the Holy Spirit. Tremendous

visions and experiences were taking place among the people.

The young lady did take heed to the prophetic word over her life and went out evangelizing in the surrounding areas, then to other islands, leading numbers to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. Today she is married to a Pastor and they are serving the Lord together.

I just felt to include these testimonies at this point. Now, back to our story . . .

## Chapter 4 **OUR FIRST OVERSEAS CALL**

**I**n 1966 an evangelist with a powerful ministry came to New Zealand from the USA. He moved in the working of miracles in a unique way. He would pray for broken down machinery and it would then work, or he would command palm trees to give a praise offering to Jesus by waving their fronds, which they did (in Samoa). Those miracles saw unbelief broken in the hearts of the people. I was with him in Wanganui (New Zealand). The meeting had concluded and we were outside the meeting hall. There on the side of the road was a young lady with a motor cycle that had broken down. It simply would not start. The evangelist walked up to her and began to tell her about the power of God and how that He could fix her motor cycle. Would she like him to pray for it? She laughed, then scoffed, saying that prayer could not fix motor cycles! They talked and argued back and forth for a little while. Then he laid his hands on the motor cycle and commanded it to start in the name of Jesus! When asked to get on her motor cycle and start it, the young lady refused, firmly stating that his prayers would have made no difference whatever to the state of her motor cycle! Finally, he insisted (in the name of Jesus!) and on her motor cycle she climbed. She gave it one kick and it roared into life! She burst into tears and rode away as fast as she could. She had not been a part of the meeting and was a total stranger.

At one of the Foxton Conventions, where he was the guest speaker that year, he called Jean and me out of the congregation. He sat us on two chairs facing the people and then asked everyone to file past and around us, blessing us in the name of the Lord. Over the next half hour or so there was praying and weeping over us such as we had never experienced before. At the end of that time he then announced that God was calling us to the Fiji Islands and that “we would set foot in those islands before the end of that year.” Prior to that we had not even thought of the possibility of going to Fiji, but things stirred in us from that point. The evangelist gave us a contact in Fiji, told us to write to the Pastor concerned, and that he would open all the necessary doors. So that is what I did. I wrote to him, explaining what had happened and how the evangelist had put me in touch with him. His reply was crushing. He told us there were no openings for us; that we Europeans were no longer needed and that the work was being done by the nationals.

The door was firmly closed.

Jean’s Mum (Edith Hunt) knew of some missionaries working in Fiji and got a burden to write to them and to tell them how God had spoken to us about going to the Fiji Islands to minister. They responded very quickly, saying they had been in much prayer over the need for a couple to go and help in the work there while one of the missionaries returned to New Zealand on furlough.

The door was open again.

We later discovered God wanted us to be involved in a specific work there, and He directed us to it.

On the evening of our departure for Fiji a group of Christians gathered at the Palmerston North Airport to farewell us. It was a very wet, windy night and while we were at the airport waiting for our plane, the announcement was made that the airport had closed due to the deteriorating weather conditions. What a disappointment!

What were we to do? The group gathered together and we had a prayer time right inside the airport, praying that God would make a way for us to get to Fiji that night. God answered those prayers in an interesting way. Even though the airport was now closed, the airport authorities were in radio contact with a larger plane (not bound for Palmerston North) but on a direct main trunk flight from Christchurch to Auckland. They managed to get the larger plane to stop in at Palmerston North, pick us up and take us on to Auckland! We all rejoiced greatly at the way by which God had so quickly answered our prayers. However, on arrival at Auckland International Airport, our luggage somehow got lost. We tried to check in for Fiji, but were not accepted until we had our luggage. No one knew where it was. It was quite an anxious time for us, looking for our luggage and, at the same time, hearing the announcement: "Final call for Fiji." The airport was crowded, with people everywhere. Again we prayed: this time only Jean and me. As soon as we had prayed, it was as though a big invisible hand had come down and separated a large section of the crowded airport. A large circle of space just opened up amongst the milling throngs, and there in the centre of the space was our luggage! No one knew how it got there. We quickly grabbed it, checked ourselves through and were soon on our first international flight to another country.

Someone had taught us the Fijian word of greeting: "Bula." As we made our way from the aeroplane to customs at Nadi International Airport we were lost amongst a sea of passengers, Fijian and Indian faces. I remember looking at a big Fijian man with a large crop of fuzzy hair, and saying, "Bula!" He immediately broke into a wonderful Fijian grin and responded by saying, "Bula! Come with me!" He led us past all the crowds straight to customs and we were one of the very first through.

We set foot on foreign soil for the first time two days before 1966 ended! We stayed in Fiji for six months before returning to New Zealand. The word of the prophet evangelist was correct. For over thirty years we have enjoyed precious fellowship and wonderful relationships with the people of so many of the lovely islands of Fiji, having returned many times to minister in these intervening years.

Those six months did enormous things for my life and ministry. Faith was challenged and stirred as never before. We had to do something with it. For the first two-and-a-half months in Fiji we were given a "programme" of 23 meetings per week! All types of meetings. From church services to prayer meetings, open-air rallies to Sunday Schools (not only on Sundays). Even meetings in private homes. I ran out of sermons the very first week! Thankfully, it threw me onto God and He came through for me. I've been able to handle a heavy ministry schedule ever since!

On returning to New Zealand my faith was released to build "The GFM," and it began to grow. After being so busy and feeling so needed during those six months in Fiji, our return to New Zealand was a bit of an anti-climax. Expected ministry doors did not open. Discouragement



began to creep in and I returned to the Post Office to deliver the mail.

## Chapter 5 **THE CHALLENGE TO BREAK FORTH**

October, 1968, was a month I'll never forget. I had an encounter with God through the Scriptures: Isaiah 54. The Holy Spirit showed me my barren heart (in comparison to what it could be) and made me to know that if I would cultivate a positive attitude toward God, my life and ministry would break forth.

***“Sing O barren . . . for you shall break forth!”***

I knew from that experience that God believed in me! That He wanted me to rise up and break forth! That my ministry could expand! I became aware of the fact that I could become a bigger person in God! I put the message of Isaiah 54:1-5 into tract form, had it printed and sent it out to contacts in various countries. Multiplied thousands of copies have since gone out all around the world. It has been reprinted in Christian newspapers, books and magazines. To this day it remains, to minister life and encouragement to many people. As a result of that encounter, over the period of the next 10 years “The GFM” multiplied 16 times over!

It is my firm conviction that every Christian needs to have an encounter with God that will powerfully and positively impact their life. I've had several over the years and each time God has done a deeper work than before. Each time I have a renewed, enlarged vision of what God and I can do together afterward. One of my books, “An Encounter With God,” is about one of those times. Scores of people have been “spoken to” by God while reading it. I know of ministers who make a point of reading that book each year, to remind them of the challenges and benefits of an encounter with God.

Those early years, in many ways, were hard years. “The Open Door Mission” was in decline, numerically, and no matter what we did, it seemed to get smaller. They were “wilderness years” interspersed with supernatural experiences in God. Yet in spite of the difficulties, there was always a good spirit in the meetings. We just didn't attract people. It used to discourage me at times, even to the point of my thinking about changing church. But every time I seriously looked at doing that, it was like God would slam the door closed in my face and I'd stay put. Staying at “The Open Door Mission” did mean I had regular preaching experience, and of course I had a growing literature ministry established in the building there.

It was during those hard years that I learned to operate in the Gift of the Holy Spirit known as the word of knowledge. I found it difficult to minister in this gift to a handful of people I had known and fellowshiped with for a number of years. I had to know the difference between what was of God the Holy Spirit and what was of me.

“Was it God, or Rod?”

As much as it “scared” me back then, I have for many years now thanked God for the lessons learned in those times. They laid the foundation for what has now become an international ministry in the Gifts of the Holy Spirit that often include functioning in the apostolic and prophetic realms. Back there I learned who the “words” were for and how to minister them in grace. Over the years God has enabled me to impart this gift to others, who now function powerfully in that realm.



***“And though your beginning was small, yet your latter end would greatly increase”*** (Job 8:7, AMP.).

***“For who has despised the day of small things?”*** (Zechariah 4:10, KJV).

We should never despise the day of small things or small beginnings. God can cause people and ministries to arise out of the obscure places. And throughout the 1960’s and 1970’s “The ODM” was an “obscure” place. Obscure to man, but certainly not obscure to God. For out of those wilderness years God raised up a number of men and women who today impact many many people world-wide.

In 1974 Jean’s Dad, Pastor Clarrie Hunt, had a massive stroke that left him paralyzed and speechless. That meant I was left in charge of the running of the church. When he died in 1977 I officially became the Pastor of the church I was saved in back in 1959 (I had been Pastoring it unofficially for three years since his stroke). It was also the year that I became the Managing Editor of “The Evidence,” a 52-page magazine and the official organ of the missionary organisation, “World Outreach.” I served “World Outreach” for five years (1974-1979).

They were busy days. Three months were spent in Hong Kong “learning the ropes” and transferring the magazine to New Zealand. I was also the Founder/Director of “The GFM” and now Pastor of “The ODM.” In those years I had many people telling me what I could not do. Very few told me what I could do. (Things have not changed very much in that department today either.)

Oh, where are the encouragers?

## Chapter 6

# **YOU CAN MEASURE YOUR LOVE FOR GOD**

**F**or me 1976 was another year I’ll never forget. It was in that year God stopped me in my tracks. I had been a Pentecostal preacher for 16 years but one day He spoke to me these words:

***“I am going to teach you how to LOVE people!”***

I re-acted!

I said: “But, Lord! I do love people! I’m a Pentecostal preacher and I’ve been preaching for 16 years! Of course I love people!”

In the next few moments, very clearly through my mind went the faces of five or six Christians I did not like!

The Holy Spirit spoke again to me:

***“How can a man say that he loves God Whom he has not seen, if he does not love his own brother who he has seen?”***

It came straight from 1 John 4:20.

He then added some further words that have impacted my life even to the present day.

***“I want you to know that you can actually measure your love for Me. Your love for Me is only as great as your love for your brothers and sisters.”***

I was silenced!

Dumb-founded!

My heart was exposed, and I knew it.

I realized I had been guilty of trying to build my love for God on a one-way vertical track, seeking God without taking the time to discover that **our spirituality is measured by God in terms of our relationships with our fellow Christians**. I had majored on a “vertical love to God” relationship but had neglected the “horizontal love to my fellow man” relationship.

As I stood there pondering what I had just heard, I reflected over the past 16 years of my Christian life. I had poured countless hours into prayer, into seeking God, studying the Bible, not missing church meetings. Yet here I was, staggered, because I saw that after 16 years my love for God was only as great as my love for *“the least of these My brethren”* (those five or six people who flashed through my mind). One of them was an elderly gentleman who had been in the church all of the 16 years I had been there. Every Sunday he came and sat in the same place near the back of the church, where he could clearly see up the aisle to the pulpit and the preacher. He would sit there with his arms folded and a stern look on his face. He looked like he had been “baptized in lemon juice”! I had become discouraged in my ministry because of him. My reasoning was that in all the years I had been preaching, his life did not seem to change one little bit. That made me feel ineffective as a preacher. I thought that I was not making any impact on the congregation. **The Holy Spirit showed me that I loved God only as much as I loved that man!**

Guess who had to change?

Some of the other faces were Christians who were very opinionated or critical of what I was trying to achieve in the literature and preaching ministries. The Holy Spirit showed me that I only loved God as much as I loved them.

*“I am going to teach you how to love people.”*

## Chapter 7

### **DISCOVERING HOW “THE OTHER HALF” LIVE**

**W**ithin a very short time God set to work to teach me how to love people. I would be sitting in my church office when a knock would come on the door. Around the corner of the door would appear a complete stranger asking me to help them. They would sit down and very soon would be pouring out their hearts to me confessing to all kinds of sins and crimes. It really shook me. In my sheltered upbringing I had never known how “the other half” lived. I would sit there somewhat stunned as the confessions came from a growing number of people seeking me out. I didn’t know who they were and wondered why on earth they were coming to me. The more they came, the worse were the confessions of their crimes; thieving, assaults, rapes, drug addictions, drug dealings, homosexuality, even a murderer. As they poured their hearts out to me I would be silently crying out to God on the inside for His help. I felt it was **me** needing help, not them! Why was I (as a Christian) so ignorant of these people desperately seeking answers and help. I was so ignorant of the life-styles of these people knocking on my door that I was really surprised when one day a knock was that of the head of the Criminal Investigation Branch of the Palmerston North Police. He asked to talk with me. The conversation went something like this:

“I want to talk to you about the people coming to your church.”

“What’s a church for?” I replied, “People still come to church.”

“Yes, but most of the people are not coming here on Sundays, they’re coming through the

week.”

Then he went on to say, “I think you ought to know that for the past three months the Police have had a 24-hour watch on your church. We want to know what’s going on in here. What are these people coming to see you for?”

I replied: “I don’t know anything about these people, except what they come to talk to me about (their problems).”

“What do they talk to you about?”

“About their personal problems.”

“Fair enough,” the CIB man answered, “But you need to be aware that all of the most wanted criminals in the Manawatu are making a ‘bee-line’ to your door, and we want to know why.”

“Ah, that’s between God, them and me.”

He accepted my answer and, before leaving, complimented me on my work, in particular the helping of people living that kind of life-style.

Each time one of those people would come to talk to me, something would happen inside of me. Prior to God challenging me about my love for people, my attitudes toward those “alternate life-styler’s” (to mine!) was terrible. I would critically reject them out of hand. Now I found myself wanting to accept them, help them, even love them! As busy as I was, I always found time for those underworld guys who came to talk to me.

Out of those times I developed a very simple philosophy of ministry, but one I was to be severely tested on in the days to come. My philosophy was this: “I don’t care how far anyone has fallen, I believe in Jesus they can rise again.” Nearly every Christian immediately affirms that philosophy, **until it starts to affect them.**

I was now feeling very useful in my helping of my new “friends.” I knew it was all happening because God was teaching me how to love people. Barriers were breaking down inside me on the right and left. Before, if any Christian had tried to give me one of those “holy hugs,” I would go “as stiff as a concrete telegraph pole” and want to escape. I was afraid that if people got too close to me, they would see something about me they wouldn’t like, and reject me. **But now I found myself falling in love with the unlovely of our city.**

All went well until the Christians began to find out the sort of persons who were coming into the church for help. They began to react. They let me know that they did not want “those sorts” coming into “the house of God” to “defile the sanctuary.”

I was shocked!

These were the same people who said that they believe Jesus is the “Answer for all mankind.” Yet, when mankind comes to the church to find help and answers, it is the Christians who “manifest.”

As the people continued to come to me for counselling, the more pressure was applied to me by various members of the church. Some reverted to quoting Scriptures at me. “You know, Pastor ... ***a little leaven leavens the whole lump***” (1 Corinthians 5:6; Galatians 5:9), inferring that those people I was seeking to help and to bring to Jesus, were going to taint and defile the church.

When some found out that I was involved in counselling homosexuals, they stated “that unless I

stopped allowing those people to come into the church, God would judge us.” One man (not from our church) let it be known at that time how he had had a vision of an angel of God coming down and writing the word “Ichabod” over our church door! “Ichabod” is mentioned in 1 Samuel 4:21-22 and means “the glory is departed” or “where is the honour and glory?” It is amazing how quick we Christians judge people, ministries, or things because they are doing something a little different to the norm. Over the period of those attacks, the Lord reminded me many times that I only loved Him as much as I loved ***“the least of His brethren.”*** Even though their re-actions and accusations hurt, I knew it was not right for me to respond or try to justify myself. God would have to vindicate. And He did!

By then my life and ministry was being established upon a new foundation and philosophy: **“I only loved God as much as I loved people.”**

### Chapter 8

## **THE VULNERABILITY STAGE**

**T**he changing process made me very vulnerable. To be “vulnerable” means to be “capable of being physically or emotionally wounded or hurt; open to temptation, persuasion, censure; exposed to attack” (Collins).

As I reached out in love I opened myself up to be misunderstood. On numbers of occasions since 1976 the Holy Spirit has interrupted me when I would seek to minister according to Pentecostal traditions. (Yes! Pentecostals have their traditions.) Traditionally we preach, have an altar call and pray personally for the people responding. But I’ve discovered that is not always God’s way. We can still do that and yet miss ministering to the many desperate needs that respond. I remember one of the times the Holy Spirit interrupted me. I was in a meeting of around 200 people. After I preached and gave the altar call several responded. As I stepped forward to pray for a well-groomed, well-dressed lady of about 40 years, the Holy Spirit said to me: ***“She doesn’t need your prayers, she needs your love. She’s been used, abused and thrown away.”***

From all of the visual signs the lady looked as though she had it all together.

But the Holy Spirit had spoken: ***“If she’ll let you, take her into your arms and let My love flow through you to her.”***

At that moment logic tried to take over by telling me: “What will the people say if you do that? What will they think of you, Preacher Boy?” I opened my eyes and felt 400 eye-balls (glass ones included!) all staring right at me! Talk about feeling vulnerable! The Holy Spirit prompted me again, so I stepped up to the lady (totally unknown to me and to this day I don’t even know her name) and said to her: “It’s alright Sister, the Lord has shown me about you. You have been used, abused and thrown away. Tonight the Lord wants to assure you of His great love for you. If you will let Him impart some of that love to you through me, just come into my arms.” At that point she burst into tears, came into my arms and sobbed and sobbed and sobbed. That night I did not pray for her, but the love of God flowing through me impacted her in such a way she walked out of that meeting a changed lady.

Some of you may question the wisdom of this. All that I can say is that I have discovered the Holy Spirit knows exactly what each of us needs, and He knows the way in which we need to receive, from the heart of God. Our responsibility is to obey the Holy Spirit. It always works out

right when we do what He asks.

**\* Love knows the way!**

This does not happen with all the people I pray for. But from time to time I know that He wants me to embrace people in such a way that an impartation of His love takes place. What a difference it makes when people feel loved; when they know they're loved and accepted. Even if they feel they have "blown it" in a big way in their lives.

Another more recent case comes to mind. I was ministering in Wales on a Sunday morning. As I sat on the platform waiting to minister the Holy Spirit showed me a man sitting in the meeting:

***"I want you to call him out into the centre aisle and impart the Father's love into him."***

His appearance revealed the many years of hard living and surviving on the streets. His nose had been broken several times in drunken brawls. In short, his life had been a real mess. But in recent months he had found Jesus as his personal Saviour and was in a Christian institution trying to get his life together. When the right moment presented itself I walked down from the pulpit and along the centre aisle, publicly inviting the man to come and join me. He did so. I explained to the church what the Holy Spirit had shown me and what I was about to do. I then took that man into my arms and prayed for God to let him feel the power of the Father's love. Something was imparted to that precious soul that day. When I opened my eyes, I noticed people all over the congregation were wiping tears from their eyes. The man responded powerfully to the love I demonstrated and he likewise hugged me and held me close.

He was so encouraged with what happened to him that day. After the service was over he told me how he had not been able to read or write and he felt challenged to learn to do those things. What a joy and pleasant surprise it was (about two weeks later) to receive a letter from him demonstrating and testifying to his progress.

**How glad I am that God, in His grace and mercy, taught me how to love people. That He interrupted this preacher's life-style in 1976, revealing how wrong I had been in seeking only a love relationship with Him at the expense of learning to love His people.**

I will never forget the words: ***"You can measure your love for Me. You only love Me as much as you love these, the least of My brethren."***

By the time the 1980's came around, I found myself involved in a busy counselling and deliverance ministry. The church had finally turned a corner and had started to grow. For many years "The Open Door Mission" had been an Independent Pentecostal Fellowship. I felt it had become far too isolated and I personally needed to flow in more closely with other ministers for our own benefit. For three years I was a part of the "New Life Churches of New Zealand," where my minister friends were. Yet I somehow felt that was not where God wanted me. Through a series of events I found myself mixing with some of the "Elim Pentecostal" Ministers. They invited me to attend some of their functions and relationships developed out of that. I became a part of the Elim Movement after several years of being in a "loose affiliation." "The Open Door Mission" became the "Palmerston North Elim Church." The Elim Movement ordained me in 1986 and in 1987 I was elected onto their National Executive, a position I held for over ten years

before I stood down to pursue new ventures in God.

## Chapter 9 **ALL HELL LET LOOSE!**

Meanwhile, my involvement in counselling people, many of whom were non-Christian, continued. Then in 1981 a telephone call came from a heroin addict, asking if we could help people like her. My simple philosophy: “No matter how far in life one has fallen, I believe in Jesus that they can rise again,” was shared and the encouragement given that we believed there were answers for her in Jesus. An appointment was made and this became the beginning of a season in Jean’s and my life where it seemed “all hell was to break loose.” It didn’t take long for us to realize that the heroin addiction was merely “the tip of the ice-berg” and we had a real challenge on our hands. The woman was 25 years old and married to a drug dealer. A short time after our meeting the marriage broke up and we took the woman into our home to help her reform. We soon discovered she was part of a Satanic coven and she had great need of deliverance from evil spirits that were now set on destroying us. When the woman came into our home she weighed less than six stone and did not seem to eat or sleep. She was “popping” approximately 100 pills a day and “mainlining” on heroin. Soon we came to the attention of the coven and drug leaders, and a concerted effort was directed at us. They wanted us to let the woman go back to where she belonged, under their care.

A change took place. Now, instead of the criminals coming for counselling and help, we were being subjected to the wrath of the “Mr. Big’s” and the “nasties” of the underworld. Continual harassment over the telephone happened between 10:30 p.m. and 4:30 a.m. for the next two years! We started being followed when we went out in the car. Strangers would sit in cars in the church car-park watching us.

As much as possible we tried to live normal lives, Pastor the church and develop a growing literature ministry. We felt we did not need all this attention. Fear strategies and tactics were applied against us. But our Lovely, All-Powerful Lord Jesus took fear out of our hearts and that frustrated the enemy no end!

**\* Oh, that wonderful love of God!**

*“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love”* (1 John 4:18, KJV).

Another translation puts it like this:

*“Love contains no fear ~ indeed fully-developed love expels every particle of fear, for fear always contains some of the torture of feeling guilty. This means that the man who lives in fear has not yet had his love perfected”* (J.B. Phillips).

What a powerful statement this is!



**\* Is it real in your life?**

We helped the woman go “cold turkey” and come off the heroin. We even were able to minister powerfully and break a curse of barrenness over her life (she had never been able to carry a child full-term in the womb). Then there was a subtle twist. The woman lived with us, but continued to see her husband.

She got pregnant.

Guess who got the blame?

Me!

By this time the spirit world was really stirring, and more and more Christians were becoming aware of some of the things we were battling with. Not only did we have “the hoods” on our back, we were now copping flak from the Christians. For a while, every time a lady in the church got pregnant, the jokes and accusations were: “Old ‘super-stud’ has been at it again!”

These things were quite hurtful, especially to my wife Jean.

As the pressures continued to increase against us we knew that we were in a situation where we needed to prove the power of God was greater than Satan. Fear was rampant ~ both amongst the criminals and the Christians! Threats against our lives, threats to kidnap our son and then death contracts being let out against us made us live very close to God. All through those five years (from 1981-1986) we were under continual threat against our lives, home and church. No matter how hard the enemy attacked, the wonderful fearless love of God kept us one step ahead. We were being buffeted within and without. By that I mean, the Christian community as well as the world. The stories circulating about us were rife.

During that time our church grew too large for our building and we purchased a spacious warehouse. The stories went around that we had purchased and renovated the building with money supplied from the drug scene “to keep our mouths shut.” (By that time I had become aware of a lot of the “happenings” of the drug scene in New Zealand.) None of those stories were true.

While we continued to make some progress with the woman in our home, we found we hit a “brick wall” when it came to dealing with the occultic bondages, secrecy vows and rituals that were binding her life. We had no prior knowledge or experience of such things as Satanic covens. However, the Lord helped us and sent people to us at crucial times. The Holy Spirit began giving words of knowledge and discerning of spirits that enabled us to know the things that were keeping her life locked up. And as long as the demonic activity was still operating in her life ~ strongly helped by her fellow initiated Satanists ~ our life was the target of attack. Jean and I had to make sure every knife, screw-driver and sharp object were kept in a safe place or I was likely to be on the receiving end of such! I did have some narrow escapes!

Through the Gifts of the Holy Spirit we discovered the coven secrecy vows, coven names, animal spirits they receive at initiation ~ all highly secret ~ which enabled us to set the woman free. The battle was such that I poured myself into searching the Bible to see what God’s Word had to say about those things. With so many seeming to be against us we had to know where we stood with God’s Word. In those searchings I discovered the Satanic strategies of the coven, what their

tactics against us were, how they were committed to “*wearing out the saints*” (Daniel 7) and causing God’s people to be destroyed (Revelation 2:12-13).

Those verses in Revelation 2 also showed us where the seat of Satan is. That is in the human mind!

As a result of my studying the Word I felt I needed to preach one message on it to the church. I entitled it: “The Evil Powers Of Canaan” (see my book of the same name). I only got about half-way through it in the morning service and so I announced to the church that I would finish the message in the evening meeting. After the morning meeting was over, several approached me and let me know they did not appreciate me finishing that message. They said, “We don't want to hear it. We want to hear about **Jesus.**” But their concerns somehow had a hollow ring to them, they didn’t quite ring true.

What a conflict I had all through that Sunday afternoon. Would I listen to those who complained, or would I follow the conviction of my heart? Finally, I decided to finish the message. I am so glad I did. For, as I stood preaching the message that night, it was like the Holy Spirit came and sat on my left shoulder and whispered in my left ear: “*The prince spirit's name is Beelzebub!*”

I would never have guessed it.

It had never dawned on me that spirits named in the Bible were still around today and were still known by the same names!

Now I knew who we were dealing with.

I also knew I did not need to do anything.

Beelzebub knew that I knew, and all I had to do was to wait for him to over-play himself. Sure enough, two nights later he did. Reinforcements were called in, that is I called for some others to come and help me, and the battle began. From out of the woman’s mouth a very deep man’s voice spoke to us, scowling, growling and mocking with the words: “She’s mine, she’s mine. You'll never get me out of here . . . she’s mine.” Beelzebub even began naming ministers who had tried and failed, all to discourage us in our mission. However, we persisted and forty-five minutes later Beelzebub was defeated and ejected and changes began to take place.

Yes, friends, the power of God is greater than all the power of the enemy!

**And we need to know that!**

### [Chapter 10](#)

## **AN AMAZING CONFESSION FROM A HIT MAN!**

**T**ime and space does not permit me to tell of a host of experiences we went through in those years. But one thing is sure, we proved the power of God is greater than the power of Satan!

After five years of non-stop harassment against us, including three known death contracts out on us ~ all of which obviously failed ~ the queen of the coven made a phone call to a Pastor in our city and **confessed to him that the power of Jesus had to be stronger than the power of Satan. Everything they had done to try and destroy us had failed. She told him they had never failed before!**

One very remarkable confession we heard during those difficult years was from a professional

“hit-man.” One who was paid to kill me. I share this to the glory of the keeping power of God. I was in Auckland, New Zealand, to speak at some meetings. Just prior to the start of one of those meetings a complete stranger walked up to me and asked: “Are you Rodney Francis, the minister from Palmerston North?”

“Yes.”

“I need to talk to you. I was a professional hit-man. I was paid \$10,000 to kill you. The coven people gave me a brand new Toyota motor-car to drive to Palmerston North to shoot you and that girl. I had only driven about 60 miles when the engine of that new car blew to pieces. So I went back to Auckland and they gave me another car. This time I drove about 250 miles, when suddenly the second car engine blew to pieces. I made a telephone call to Auckland to tell them what had happened. They told me to get a rental car and get on and do the job (of killing me). So I got a rental car and drove another 100 miles when the third car’s engine blew to pieces.”

He said he was “freaking out” over those weird events. As a hit-man he had done his planning and preparation meticulously well. He had left no room for chance or mistakes.

He told me that his confidence was so shattered by then that he could not bring himself to hire another car. Instead, he rang a gang in our city and got them to go and pick him up to take him the last twelve miles to Palmerston North! He had 27 guns in the car to sell to the gang after he had disposed of me. The gang took him to a house not very far from where we lived.

But his troubles were by no means over.

He had been at that house only half an hour when the police did a raid and caught him “red-handed” with the guns. He was taken to the local Police Station. There he was allowed to make one telephone call. The hit-man was part of a four-member gang who did the “dirty work” for the coven. He telephoned the leader of his gang and told him the story of the strange happenings from the time he left Auckland. By the time our hit-man had told the story of the cars blowing up, and how he was under arrest and ringing from the Police Station, the leader on the other end of the telephone ~ a man of 30 years of age ~ dropped dead with a heart attack! That freaked the hit-man out further! He couldn’t understand what was going on. He had never before experienced anything like that in his whole life. He went on to tell me how he went before the judge at the Courthouse and was given a sentence of six-and-a-half years in New Zealand’s Maximum Security Prison Unit at Paremuremu (on the outskirts of Auckland City).

Day after day, as he sat alone in his cell, he went over the events that he had experienced in his efforts to kill the little preacher who was annoying the covens. And every time he could not come up with any satisfactory answer. He was a bitter, angry man. While in prison (he told me) the other two members of his gang died, one from a drug overdose. How the other man died he did not say. There he was, all alone, perplexed by the strange events of his recent life.

During the same period of time our hit-man was in prison, someone introduced into that place “The Gospel Faith Messenger” Bible Correspondence Courses. It wasn’t long before we had something like 36 inmates answering Bible Lessons by correspondence. Numbers gave their hearts to Jesus, and later on, permission was granted for Pastors to go into the prison and water baptize the new converts. The Lord was at work in the prison. But our hit-man did not want anything to do with the Christians or their meetings that were taking place. He was very anti-

Christ and, I guess, I hadn't helped his attitudes either. His mission to kill me had gone horribly wrong! And I was the reason he was in there!

As time went on, one of the now Christian inmates plucked up enough courage to ignore the hit-man's cursing and profanities against the Lord and bravely told him a few home truths about his attitudes and behaviour in the prison. He told the hit-man he was being "a misery guts" and the meetings wouldn't hurt him. In fact they would do him a lot of good! The hit-man relented and went to a meeting, but under protest. Whoever it was that preached that night ministered in the will of God. At the end of his message he got all present to bow their heads and close their eyes. He then asked for anyone wanting to give their life to Jesus to put their hand up. The hit-man told me: "I didn't want to give my heart to Jesus, but the next thing my hand shot up ~ and the preacher saw it! He came to talk to me and I found myself yielding my life to Jesus that night."

Then he shared this remarkable statement: "You know, *the moment I gave my heart to Jesus, this voice spoke to me and told me that I had been fighting against God and against His servant, Rodney Francis. 'And when you get out of this place, you are to find that preacher and ask him to forgive you.'*"

Suddenly everything fell into place for him. He now knew why the three car engines had blown up, the loss of confidence, the Police raid, his being caught and put into prison . . . **and now he had become a Christian!**

God had not allowed him to touch me.

And, just as God had told him, when he was released from prison as a new creation in Christ, he tracked me down and came to me with the story I have just shared with you. At the end he looked right into my eyes and said, "Sir, will you please forgive me for trying to kill you?"

I was very happy to do so.

Some time later there was a lot of publicity throughout Australia and New Zealand regarding suspicions about a Day Care Centre in Sydney, Australia, supposedly being operated by the Satanists. My name was given to the Police by someone unknown and they sent two officers to interview me about what I knew of the activities of Satanists. As their questioning of me ended I decided to testify to them of the hit-man's story. They listened intently, and at the end, the older policeman (with a smile on his face) said: "I know exactly who you're talking about. I was the officer who arrested him with all those guns." He went on to tell me where the house was, who it belonged to, and filled in some of the details. To this day I have never remembered the hit-man's name.

## Chapter 11

### **LET THE BIBLE SPEAK**

**G**od sure knew how to prepare me for the Holy Spirit power ministry when He said: "*I'm going to teach you how to love people.*"

**\* Love was the key through all those trying times.**

When, naturally, we would want to curse the Satanic covens and hit-men, the Holy Spirit would give us the grace to pray for them, love them and desire their salvation.

\* ***“Love is of God!”*** (1 John 4:7).

But love ~ God’s kind of love ~ is not a “wishy-washy, mambi-pambi” weak, worldly, word only love.

**It is very powerful and impacts lives in a powerful way.**

It is God’s way of ministering to people, regardless of their circumstances.

\* ***“God is Love!”*** (1 John 4:8).

\* **So, why do we struggle in loving one another?**

\* **Why are we afraid to love?**

Why do we struggle to love one another?

In many instances it is because our trust in our fellow human beings has been let-down, even shattered. (If we do not trust people, can we honestly say we still trust God?) We build the defences, the reservations right within our own hearts and that causes barriers to be built up on the inside. Once those barriers are up, it is so easy for us to live our life within and behind a facade. People never get to know the real you or the real me. Trusting people always seems to get filtered through the spectacles of past bad experiences. If we do try once again to reach out to trust others ~ and it doesn’t work ~ then we don’t want to try again. **But in our doing that, we are closing the door to receiving the very thing we long for more than ever: to be genuinely loved and accepted.**

**Why are we afraid to love?**

Past hurts make us afraid to love outwardly and positively. And, if we do try, we seem to make such “a hash” of it that we then condemn ourselves because it all seems to go wrong! My encouragement to you is: **never stop reaching out! Never “switch-off” to giving and receiving love! Others need your love!**

**Everywhere I go today, people are crying out to be loved.**

\* **You love to be loved!**

\* **I love to be loved!**

**Christianity, according to the Bible, has everything to do with love.**

\* **Love is very positive!**

It is not negative.

**When love is actively working in our life we become very positive people. Love ~ God’s kind of love ~ gives us a security that nothing else can!**

Most Christians think Christianity is all about loving God. The greater majority of Christian songs on love are about loving God.

**But the Bible says it’s all about loving people!**

Consider these Scriptures:

***“For brethren, you have been called unto liberty: only use not liberty for an occasion***



(“impulse, excitement”) *to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; You shall love your neighbour as yourself*” (Galatians 5:13-14, KJV).

*“Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loves another has fulfilled the law. For this, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, You shall not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, You shall love your neighbour as yourself: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law”* (Romans 13:8-10, KJV).

*“If you fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, You shall love your neighbour as yourself, you do well”* (James 2:8, KJV).

**I find it interesting that the Bible focus of Christianity is all about loving our neighbour.**

### **We have made it all about loving God!**

Now it is true that there is no way we can honestly love our neighbour, until first we have allowed the love of God to penetrate our heart, mind and attitudes. But once His love has shone in our hearts, **the practical outworking of God’s love in our life is our ability to demonstrate love to our neighbour.**

**The reality of Christianity stands or falls on this fact!**

All of the law is fulfilled in the command to **love our neighbour!**

Yet we find so many Christians really struggle in loving their fellow Christians, let alone allowing their lives to be shared with those outside the kingdom of God. It is easier to “escape” into a vertical love relationship with God and “hide” there, than it is to let our lives become *“an open book, known and read of all men”* (2 Corinthians 3:2).

**We want to be spiritual and close to God, but we ignore His Number One injunction that it all happens as we allow His love to flow from our heart to others.** Not just those who have the same life-style, or standards; but to as many as possible, right across age groupings, race groupings and culture groupings. Some of us can be in the same church for years, yet have never broken outside of the little circle of friends we talk to week after week. We deprive ourselves ~ and others ~ of so much of what God wants us to discover when we fail to let love reach out to bless *“our neighbours.”* We were not born to be an island, or to live in isolation; to be a recluse, or to live in loneliness all the time. We have the most Loving Heavenly Father, the Living, Resurrected Son of God (Jesus) and the Mighty Holy Spirit living inside us! His commitment to us is far beyond anything we really deserve! Yet His love is always available to help us through our trials (which means we come out all the better for it the other end):

*“We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials for we know that they are good for us ~ they help us learn to be patient. And patience develops strength of character in us and helps us trust God more each time we use it until finally our hope and faith are strong and steady. Then, when that happens, we are able to hold our heads high no matter what happens and know that all is well, for we know how dearly God loves us, and we feel this warm love*

*everywhere within us because God has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His love”*  
(Romans 5:3-5, TLB).

- \* **We are immersed in the Father’s love!**
- \* **It now lives within us!**

The challenge is to let it be released out of us to touch a desperately needy, love-starved world!  
The place to start, Christian, is the local church where you fellowship. God put you there ~ if for  
no other reason than that you can learn to love people just as Jesus loves you!

Reach out!  
Speak your love out!  
Express it positively!

Let’s read the Scripture:

*“Don’t run up debts, except for the huge debt of love you owe each other. When you love others, you complete what the law has been after all along. The law code ~ don’t sleep with another person’s spouse, don’t take someone’s life, don’t take what isn’t yours, don’t always be wanting what you don’t have, and any other “don’t” you can think of ~ finally adds up to this: Love other people as well as you do yourself. You can’t go wrong when you love others. When you add up everything in the law code, the sum total is love”* (Romans 13:8-10, The Message).

No matter how we look at it, love is the priority commandment of Jesus for our life. It has to take precedence over every other Christian teaching. **There is no substitute.** Let me repeat: **There is no substitute!**

When Jesus was questioned by a Pharisaic lawyer, *“Master, which is the great commandment in the law?”* Jesus replied, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and prophets”* (Matthew 22:36-40, KJV).

The first two commandments are all about love ~ God and people!

If you look at Mark’s Gospel version of this you discover an interesting thing:

*One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked Him, “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 neighbour as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”*

*“Well said, Teacher,” the man replied, “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but Him. To love Him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your*

*strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”*

*When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, He said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God” (Mark 12:28-34, NIV).*

The scribe knew it theoretically, but wasn't practising it. That kept him out of the kingdom of God. He was close, but not close enough!

**\* So many of us today know the theories of Christianity, but lack the practice.**

Jesus did not separate the importance of the first two commandments. We cannot really have one without the other. **We cannot truly love God without loving our neighbour, and we cannot love our neighbour without loving God.**

**Our love for God is measured by our love for people.**

For 16 years I tried to separate the two.

It didn't work.

I didn't do it intentionally. I just struggled with getting close to people and letting people get close to me. Because of my own personal “hang-ups” of fear, inferiority, inhibitions, insecurity and self-consciousness, I was somewhat of a “closed book.” It became easy to block out those who were a threat, or over-bearing, or thought differently to me. It was easier to isolate myself unto God and develop that vertical, spiritual relationship with Him alone, than to face the challenge of loving those who thought differently, lived differently and even denied the Jesus I loved. That's why, I believe, God gave me the “crash course” of learning to love the unlovely by sending all those “different” people to me for counselling. They taught me so much about the reality of life as it is for so many. As a result I became a much more real kind of person.

Today I have no problem relating to all kinds of people, and that's a great blessing.

**\* People know if you love and accept them.**

Without us ever having to say a word, our body language and attitudes speak a message as to whether we accept or reject a person. I find it interesting that in my travels, when I'm a complete stranger in a place, people will seek me out to talk about their problems. When I ask them why they chose me to talk to, they reply to the effect that they feel safe with me.

Why?

I love and accept them as they are, and they sense and know that.

## Chapter 12

# LOVE IS WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT

After more than 40 years of preaching the Gospel I am firmly convinced that the message of Bible love is the greatest message, challenge, gift or ministry anyone can have from the heart of God.

Think about this statement from Jesus:

*“I give you a new commandment, that you should love one another; just as I have loved you, so you too should love one another. By this shall all [men] know that you are My disciples, if you love one another ~ if you keep on showing love among yourselves”* (John 13:34-35, AMP.).

*“Your strong love for each other will prove to the world that you are My disciples”* (John 13:35, TLB).

What a challenge!

**If we really want to impact society and the world for Jesus, it will be done by our loving one another!** It is not by our Bible knowledge, nor the fact we may go to church, or even pray regularly (all of which are good), **but it is by our LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER!**

**\* Why do we struggle to do this?**

**\* Are we too busy?**

**\* Or . . . is it because we haven't taken the time to face up to ~ and deal with ~ some real life issues of knowing how to build relationships with others?**

Far too many of us have come into Christianity out of hurtful, broken relationships. Our trust in people has been rather damaged and we protect ourselves from further hurt by blocking people out. If we let them get too close there is the possibility they will discover something about us they won't like, and reject us. So we keep them at “arm's length.” What we don't realize is that what we are doing to protect ourselves from further hurt, also applies to our relationship with God Himself.

**\* When we keep people at a distance we are also keeping God at a distance.**

These are very real issues for many Christians today. Until they're dealt with, we cannot know the true, fuller power of God's positive love flowing in and through our lives. We'll tend to be more negative and inward-looking, rather than outward-looking and positive.

Jesus did not teach that it is our love for God that makes others know we are His disciples. **No! It is our love for one another that does it.**

**\* We cannot separate love for God and love for people. If we struggle to love people then we haven't fully discovered the key to Christianity.**

**\* Love for God is demonstrated in our love for people!**

Yet we keep trying to separate the two. Somehow we don't like the requirement to love our neighbour. Too often we are reluctant mixers with our fellow human beings!

Let's look at the “Love Chapter” of the Bible:

*“And now I will show you the most excellent way.*

*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong*

*or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.*

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

*Love never fails . . .*

*And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13, NIV).*

1 Corinthians 13 shows us that it is possible for us to separate our love for God and fervour for ministry from our love for people. It is possible to rise to great spiritual heights, yet not love people! We can have the tongues of men and angels, the gift of prophecy, understand all mysteries, all knowledge, have faith to move mountains, feed the poor, even give our body to be burned, yet still not have love for people! Think of what life would be like if you attained to those things. You would be in demand 24 hours a day, seven days a week! People would clamour for your knowledge and understanding of life, of their future and generally of all things. **Yet the Bible clearly tells us: “If we do not love, we are nothing”!**

**\* All the study, seeking and sacrificing in the world ~ even in the name of God ~ is useless, if we do not take the time to develop love with the people.**

The Holy Spirit broke in on my life and ministry to reveal the importance of **ME** learning to love people:

*“How can a man say he loves God whom he has not seen, if he does not love his own brother whom he has seen?” (1 John 4:20).*

*“You can actually measure your love for God: your love for God is only as great as your love for people.”*

Ever since, I’ve sought to build love relationships with others. It motivates me, challenges me and releases the Holy Spirit to work through me. Ministry is on a different level when love is the motivator!

Listen to Jesus again:

*“I demand that you love each other as much as I love you. And here is how to measure it ~ the greatest love is shown when a person lays down his life for his friends; and you are My friends if you obey Me. I no longer call you slaves, for a master doesn’t confide in his slaves; now you are My friends, proved by the fact that I have told you everything the Father told Me. You didn’t choose Me! I chose you! I appointed you to go and produce lovely fruit always, so that no matter what you ask for from the Father, using My name, He will give it to you. I demand that you love each other . . .” (John 15:12-17, TLB).*



The command of Jesus is that we love one another.

\* **Be friendly!**

\* **Build relationships!**

\* **Be willing to lay down your life for a friend!**

\* **Not only for Jesus, but for a friend!**

\* How do we know we are a Christian?

\* How do we know we have passed from death unto life?

**By our love for our Christian brothers and sisters:**

*“We know that we have passed over out of the death into the Life by the fact that we love the brethren, [our fellow Christians]. He who does not love abides ~ remains, is held and kept continually ~ in [spiritual] death. Any one who (abominates, detests) hates his brother [in Christ] is [at heart] a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding (persevering) within him. By this we come to know ~ progressively to recognize, to perceive, to understand the [essential] love: that He laid down His [own] life for us; and we ought to lay [our] lives down for [those who are our] brothers [in Him]” (1 John 3:14-16, AMP.).*

“The Message” (Eugene H. Peterson) puts it this way:

*“The way we know we’ve been transferred from death to life is that we love our brothers and sisters. Anyone who doesn’t love is as good as dead. Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know very well that eternal life and murder don’t go together.*

*This is how we’ve come to understand and experience love: Christ sacrificed His life for us. This is why we ought to live sacrificially for our fellow believers, and not just be out for ourselves. If you see some brother or sister in need and have the means to do something about it but turn a cold shoulder and do nothing, what happens to God’s love? It disappears. And you made it disappear.*

*My dear children, let’s not just talk about love; let’s practice real love. This is the only way we’ll know we’re living truly, living in God’s reality.”*

These Bible verses have really challenged me over the years.

Here’s the proof of a transformed Christian life: We no longer hate people. Rather we love people, especially those who believe on the Lord Jesus.

\* **The test of our love is whether or not we’re willing to lay down our life for them?**

This is God’s way for us.

What a challenge to know that true Christian love means loving our Brothers and Sisters enough to be willing to lay our life down for them. Most of us would willingly say that we would lay our life down for Jesus, but the Scripture doesn’t say that.

It tells us to be willing to lay down our life for one another!

That’s quite a different thing.

Unless our love for one another is genuine and real, we would never lay down our life for them.

But the Bible tells us that is what we are willing to do when we love one another. We all know John 3:16, but how well do we know 1 John 3:16?

***“We ought to lay down our lives for our brothers”*** (NIV).

If we love our brother, we will believe what God’s Word says:

***“He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him”*** (1 John 2:10, NKJV).

The New Century Version says:

***“Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light and will not cause anyone to stumble in his faith.”***

Love works both ways. We won’t stumble ourselves and we won’t cause others to stumble.

***“Above all things have fervent (“extended, stretched out”) love among yourselves: for love shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging”*** (1 Peter 4:8-9, KJV).

***“And He has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother”*** (1 John 4:21, NIV).

These verses all emphasize the need to focus our love every bit as much on people as well as our love to God. There’s no way of getting around it! We do this because of our great love for God. The love of God, and our love for the unseen God, is expressed through our love for people who are visible all around us. So . . .

**\* How is your love developing?**

**\* If you measured it right now, how great would be your love for God?**

**\* You can measure your love for God!**

When love is operating in our heart to others, it opens the door for compassion to be released. Compassion always operates through love. I remember a time in Papua New Guinea, sitting in a church waiting for the meeting to start. As the people came into the meeting I observed them. One lady, a Pastor’s wife, walked in through a side entrance. A feeling of tremendous love and compassion welled up within me, then the Holy Spirit spoke: ***“That woman has a wounded spirit. She has been wounded by the criticisms of people. Today I want you to set her free, and while you’re about it, change your message!”*** I was quite taken aback.

“Lord, it’s five minutes before the service starts and You want me to change my message!”

As I waited silently upon the Lord and looked to Him for the subject to speak on, I felt the need to share with the people on the love of God. And that’s what I did that day. When it was time for me to preach I introduced myself, began to speak and then stopped. Pointing to the Pastor’s wife, I spoke out in compassion, telling her about her wounded spirit and how it happened. She broke down and cried. Without even touching her, or leaving the pulpit, I broke the power of negative

criticism over her life, commanding her spirit to be healed. Then I finished my message on the love of God. After the service numbers of people came to thank me for the message. They said: “Thank you for being obedient to God. For over two years we’ve been praying for God to send someone to us to speak that message, because we knew we did not have the authority to speak it.”

The Pastor’s wife also spoke to me and shared of her struggles; of having to make herself go to church because she was so wounded on the inside. God had sent me there, not only to minister to one precious individual, but got me to change my message in order that I would bring a prophetic word to that whole church.

I went away for three weeks ministering in other parts of Papua New Guinea. On my return to that church I was joyfully met by the Pastor, the husband of the woman with the wounded spirit. He poured out to me his excitement of “having a new wife.” He told me he had never lived so close to a miracle in all of his life. His wife was wonderfully healed. He then went on to share with me how approximately three years previous he felt God had called him to a change of ministry, which meant resigning from the church and relocating to another part of Papua New Guinea. But because of his wife’s condition (they did not know it was a wounded spirit) he could not bring himself to take the step, fearing it would make his wife worse. For three years he had carried that burden in his heart, waiting for something to happen to heal his wife. He told me his wife was so healed and changed that the very next Sunday he was going to announce his resignation and prepare to move to where he believed God had called him. And he did it.

How I thank God that He taught me how to love people. I doubt if I could have been the one to minister to that Pastor’s wife if I hadn’t personally had a radical change of heart, attitude, motivation and direction in my own life. We preachers can get so caught up in our sermons (and in sharing the points we’ve studied to share with the people), that if our hearts are not full of love and compassion for the people, we can miss these beautiful “moments” in God that transform lives. The Holy Spirit has shown me on more than one occasion how I can actually be in direct disobedience to Him while I am in the process of preaching the Word! The Holy Spirit knows every person and every need in a meeting. All He needs is for someone to listen to Him, be flexible enough to change, be willing to flow in love and compassion, so that they can be used to be a carrier of a miracle of grace.

**Scores of lives around the world have been impacted that way since I’ve discovered how to measure my love for God by my love for people.**

As a direct result of the healing of that Pastor’s wife, I was invited back to Papua New Guinea to teach church leaders and people on the Gifts and Ministry of the Holy Spirit. I saw scores of people released in the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. It was also my privilege to lead the first overseas ministry team onto the war-torn island of Bougainville to conduct a Pastors’ Conference. How wonderful it was to see God at work in touching, encouraging, healing, restoring the love relationships amongst the leaders, then filling them to overflowing with the Holy Spirit’s Gifts to minister to one another. This was after nine years of war. Many of those Pastors had lost loved ones, had their houses and churches burned down. Their trust in each other had been somewhat shattered, but the love of God shone through and there was a beautiful time of forgiveness one of the other, a time of embracing and weeping before God and in one another’s arms. After that we

saw a number of backsliders come back to God, all drawn sovereignly by the Holy Spirit!

When God's people, especially leaders, start genuinely loving one another, we'll see the people drawn back to the churches! This generation of humanity is desperately love-starved, so why don't we show them that "our church" is the place where they can find the true, accepting love of Jesus Christ and His people? That means you and I have to demonstrate that love in reality.

**Can we do it?**

**Sure we can!**

We just have to get REAL!

### Chapter 13

## **GOD COMMANDS US TO LOVE**

*"Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned ("no pretending") love of the brethren, see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently ("in an outstretched manner"): Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides for ever" (1 Peter 1:22-23, KJV).*

*"Now that you've cleaned up your lives by following the truth, love one another as if your lives depended on it" (1 Peter 1:22, The Message).*

**T**he Word of God, obeyed in our lives, teaches us to love one another with a pure heart and pure motive in an outstretched manner. We need to see our living and walking in love as being of such a high priority as though *"our (very) lives depend on it."* Too often we are guilty of a "take it or leave it" attitude with regard to loving our neighbour.

That needs to change!

We need to change!

Then our love will very effectively help to change others and, as they change, so then our society will change.

**\* In so much as I can understand the Bible, Christianity is all about our loving one another!**

**\* It is our love for one another that reveals we have been born of God:**

*"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7, NIV).*

*"Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more" (1 Thessalonians 4:9-10, NIV).*

**\* We need to keep practising loving one another.**

**\* Can we ever be too good at it? No!**

**\* Christianity is all about love, demonstrating to God our love for Him through our love for people. It is God's commandment to us!**

Let me repeat it:

***“And so I am giving a new commandment to you now ~ love each other just as much as I love you. Your strong love for each other will prove to the world that you are My disciples”*** (John 13:34-35, TLB).

Someone has said: “Isn’t it a strange thing that the first commandment of God will most likely be the last fulfilled by the Church!” It should be the first!

Churches around the world would do themselves, others ~ and God ~ a great service if they concentrated much more on John 13:34-35. The emphasis needs to be on developing genuine love relationships, rather than on Bible doctrines, the latest trends, and whatever else may distract us.

I’ve ministered in, and attended enough churches, to know that there are scores of lonely, hurting, unfulfilled, fearful, rejected men and women sitting in the pews. Their needs are not being met. Somehow, the Christian Church has to learn to more effectively help the withdrawn to face their dilemmas and come out from them. At the same time we preachers must be filled with the knowledge of God’s priorities so that Christianity is seen to be the answer that works positively in the lives of all who embrace its message.

**\* Let us not be guilty of giving people the answers to questions they are not asking!**

They do not need another slant on faith, they need to know about a ***“faith that works by love”*** (Galatians 5:6), or, as the NIV says:

***“The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”***

Take the emphasis away from love and all we’ve got is another dead, doctrinally-instilled religion, ***“having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof”*** (2 Timothy 3:1-5, KJV). How amazing it is that “other things” can so easily take up our time and attention, at the end of which we are too often superficial in our relationships. We can be quite knowledgeable about the Scriptures, but far too quickly offended when someone criticizes or offends us. Loveless and therefore powerless.

The questions have to be asked:

**\* Why are we not doing (or giving more priority to) what God’s Word has commanded us?**  
**\* Why are we not building loving Godly relationships so that those who are struggling can be released and healed to the glory of God?**

It is not good enough for us to excuse ourselves with “That’s their problem, not ours!”

**\* Love finds a way!**

**\* Love imparts acceptance!**



**\* Love cares!**

**\* Love loves!**

Our preacher/teachers need to learn more how to impart the skills to bring the changes. Listening to the Holy Spirit and doing what He tells us is a key to this. On numbers of occasions the Holy Spirit has prompted me to encourage someone, inspire them to higher heights, to give them a prophetic word. Often my own logic tells me they don't need what I'm prompted to share with them; that they're okay. But I've learned that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. He's always right. **It is not my job to tell the Holy Spirit I think I know better than Him!** That's how disobedience works! The Holy Spirit is the Resurrection Spirit. He only knows one way to take people and that is up! He wants to encourage and lift us. God is not glorified when we, week after week, sit in church with our needs being unmet. He wants the Body of Christ to function. To release the Jesus within to touch those who are struggling and hurting.

**\* Love releases compassion and compassion always sees needs.**

(Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 15:34; Mark 1:41; Luke 7:13).

**\* Compassion wants to meet those needs with the love that comes from the heart of God.  
But it has to flow through you and me.**

**\* Love reaches out!**

**\* Love makes the first move!**

Too many of us are waiting for someone else to make the first move. We must understand the Christian way is reaching out beyond yourself in love.

***“For God so loved the world that He gave . . .”*** (John 3:16).

He didn't wait for the world to make the first move (otherwise He would still have been waiting!). He so loved that He sent His only begotten Son, His very best, so that the world would have Someone to respond to.

***“Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it”*** (Ephesians 5:25).

Jesus made the first move so the Church could respond. Now He wants you and me to make the first move toward others, so they can respond to the love of God that is ***“shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us”*** (Romans 5:5).

In Scripture after Scripture we are told to exercise our love toward others.

**\* Love separates the sinner from his sin.**

**\* Love overlooks the differences of personalities and temperaments in others.**

**\* Love is God's way, God's standard and God's command to everyone who identifies themselves as Christian.**

There really is no other way!

The fact that we can speak with the tongues of men and angels, prophesy, understand all mysteries and knowledge, be full of faith, and so on, is totally useless if the motivation is not love for people (1 Corinthians 13).

**\* What is the meaning of love?**

In the New Testament the Greek word most commonly used to express love is "agape." "Agape" love "is self-denying and compassionately devoted to its object; love in its fullest conceivable form . . . toward God, the brethren, and all" (Bullinger's).

**\* What is love? It is behaviour that is self-denying.**

**\* What is love? It is behaviour that is compassionately devoted to its object. The "object" being other people.**

**\* What is love? It is behaviour that is fully devoted in its expression toward God, toward other Christian believers and toward all the unsaved.**

**\* Love enables a person to put themselves in the other person's shoes.**

**\* What is the meaning of love?**

The dictionary has this to say: "to have a great attachment to and affection for . . . an intense emotion of affection, warmth, fondness and regard towards a person or thing" (Collins).

"An intense feeling of deep affection or fondness for a person or thing; great liking . . . a beloved one . . . delight in; admire; greatly cherish; greatly enjoy" (Oxford).

Surely it is not too great a thing to ask of Christians that we cultivate a heart-beat of love amongst ourselves. To encourage one another to actively promote the greatest possible outworking of God's love out to others? Let's learn to appreciate one another more and more. To love and respect one another more and more. To see the power that lies within us as the very key that enables others to see we belong to Jesus. Oh, for the day when we will hear others declare they know that we are His disciples because of **our love for one another!**

***"The greatest of these is love!"*** (1 Corinthians 13:13).

**\* What is the meaning of love?**

"Love is the pre-eminent virtue inculcated ("to instil by forceful or insistent repetition" - Collins) and produced by Christianity. The whole law is summed up in love, not in the sense of rendering all other requirements nugatory ("of little value" - Collins), but in the sense that love is fundamental, and expresses the spirit of all others, and with enlightenment will lead to the

observance of all others (see Matthew 22:37-39; 5:43-48; John 14:15,21; 15:12-14; Romans 13:8; 1 Corinthians 13; Galatians 5:14). Accordingly love is declared to be the chief test of Christian discipleship (see John 13:35; Matthew 5:44; 1 John 3:14). Also, love is the highest motive or ground of moral actions. Without this all other motives fall short of furnishing the true stimulus of Christian living . . ." (Unger's Bible Dictionary).

**\* Love is the pre-eminent virtue.**

It must take first place!

Everything else becomes hollow and empty when love is neglected or excluded! Our whole service for Christ must be based upon the motivation of love. Zeal, ego, good intentions, expert training, qualifications, diplomas, credentials, ordinations, and many other worthy attributes, as good as they may be, are no substitute for a life or ministry motivated by and grounded in love.

**\* Love is the priority!**

**It always was and always will be.**

I say, "Let the Church rise up afresh in the power of the love of God and change our world for the glory of God!"

As I am writing this section of the book in Manila, Philippines, I have the opportunity to go and speak in the Women's Prison here. On my last visit to Manila I was taken into that prison. How my heart was torn with compassion as I ministered to many women. Some of them in the age group of my own mother. They had been in the prison for years and many of them had not seen their families since the day they were put in there. How my heart went out to them in love, and how they responded to my love. Most of them clung onto me as I held them in my arms. Tears ran down their faces as I prayed for God's miracles to come into their lives in answer to their requests. Just thinking of that experience again caused tears to run down my face.

I've now been back to that Women's Prison a second time. As a result of the influence of the Gospel ~ and the dedication of a few very loving Christian women ~ nearly half of the women (from the first time I went there) have now been released. Jesus has made such a change in their lives that they had been paroled early! Some were still there from last time, but there were numbers of new inmates to whom I was able to minister.

"Thank You, Jesus, for the privilege of taking Your love to the nations, both high and low, rich and poor."

***"But when I, the Messiah, shall come in My glory, and all the angels with me, then I shall sit upon My throne of glory. And all the nations shall be gathered before Me. And I will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and place the sheep at My right hand, and the goats at My left.***

***"Then I, the King, shall say to those at my right, 'Come, blessed of My Father, into the Kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world. For I was hungry and you fed Me. I was thirsty and you gave Me water; I was a stranger and you invited Me into your homes; naked and you clothed Me; sick and in prison, and you visited Me.'***

*“Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Sir, when did we ever see You hungry and feed You? Or thirsty and give You anything to drink? Or a stranger, and help You? Or naked, and clothe You? When did we ever see You sick or in prison, and visit You?’*

*“And I, the King, will tell them, ‘When you did it to these My brothers you were doing it to Me!’*

*“Then I will turn to those on My left and say, ‘Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons. For I was hungry and you wouldn’t feed Me; thirsty, and you wouldn’t give Me anything to drink; a stranger, and you refused Me hospitality; naked, and you wouldn’t clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you didn’t visit Me.’*

*“Then they will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and not help You?’*

*“And I will answer, ‘When you refused to help the least of these My brothers, you were refusing help to Me.’*

*“And they shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into everlasting life”*  
(Matthew 25:31-46, TLB).

**\* When we minister to people we are ministering to Jesus.**

We need to take a few moments to meditate on the above words of Jesus. Then ask ourselves:  
“In what way am I demonstrating my love for God?”  
Jesus identified Himself with the poor, hurting and needy.

**\* With whom do we identify?**

### Chapter 14

## **“DO YOU LOVE ME MORE THAN THESE?”**

**I**n John 21 we have a very interesting account of Jesus challenging Peter’s love. Peter’s walk with Jesus up to that stage of his life had been an “up and down” one.

He struggled to be consistent.

It was a crucial time in his life.

He had experienced a traumatic time as Jesus went before His accusers, through the trial, the mockings and finally the cruel Cross. Peter had been so determined to remain faithful, even if everyone else failed. Jesus had warned him that he (Peter) would deny three times that he ever knew the Lord. As the events of that day unfolded, Peter found himself in denial of the One he really loved. When Jesus died on the Cross, Peter’s last words in the hearing of Jesus were words of swearing and cursing. Jesus died before Peter had an opportunity to say sorry and ask forgiveness.

Peter’s life was plunged into turmoil and despair.

He had failed Jesus!

He had let Jesus down, and now Jesus was dead!

Then came the resurrection, and Jesus, with His great heart of love, gave specific instructions that Peter be told (Mark 16:7). Peter really struggled to understand what was happening.

Up and down he went.

On a “downer” discouragement set in, so he made a decision to return to his old occupation of fishing. Six of the disciples decided to go with him. (I wonder what they talked about?) It was a miserable night’s fishing anyway. They caught nothing. Coming back to shore in the morning, there was a Man waiting to meet them. They did not recognize Him at first, until He told them where to put their nets to catch fish. When they did that they caught a huge haul of fish! It was John who recognized Jesus. He told Peter. Peter, under conviction, jumped overboard.

When they were all on shore ~ (and I can imagine Peter would have been the last to gather very sheepishly) ~ Jesus had provided a beautiful meal for them. I think that it may have been a silent time, with the disciples trying to comprehend the fact that Jesus was alive, as well as struggling with their own doubts, fears and faithlessness. After the meal was finished, Jesus looked right at Peter and asked this question:

***“Simon son of John, do you truly love Me more than these?”***

Peter replied: ***“Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.”***

To which Jesus said: ***“Feed My lambs.”***

Jesus did not say, “You shall love the Lord Your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind,” but ***“Feed My lambs.”***

He was saying: ***“Peter, love of Me is demonstrated in ministering to people. Feed My lambs.”***

Jesus looked at Peter again and repeated the question:

***“Simon son of John, do you truly love Me?”***

Again Peter replied: ***“Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.”***

To which Jesus responded: ***“Take care of My sheep.”***

Jesus did not rebuke Peter for his past failures, nor did He tell him to read his Bible, pray and attend church more. He challenged him to show his love for Him by feeding His sheep. Ministering to lambs (the young) and to sheep (the mature). Lambs and sheep both need feeding.

### **\* Love feeds!**

The word “feed” means “to feed, pasture; to tend as a shepherd” (Young’s).

***“Peter, if you love Me, look after My sheep, My people. Feed them.”***

Jesus, the third time, looked right into Peter’s eyes and asked:

***“Simon son of John, do you love Me?”***

This time Jesus used a different word for love. Not “agape” love as previously, but “phileo,” which means “to be a friend” (Young’s). Peter was hurt that Jesus kept on questioning him.

He said:

***“Lord, You know all things; You know that I love (“phileo”) You.”***

To which Jesus replied: ***“Feed My sheep.”***

Jesus was putting His finger on Peter’s instability as a Christian believer. Peter had not realized how love for God operates; how it expresses itself. Jesus was teaching him that it shows itself by ***“feeding”*** people, shepherding people in love. Then Jesus went on to tell Peter how selfish he



had been in his efforts to try and please the Lord:

***“I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go”*** (John 21:15-19, NIV).

Peter had been “doing his own thing” in the name of Jesus! But now he was being introduced to God’s way of love. Jesus was saying to him, ***“Peter, this is My way of love. You have to change. It is not the way you have been thinking.”***

**\* Love sacrifices for others to demonstrate love for God!**

**\* We cannot separate our love for God from love for people!**

**\* It is our love for people that enables us to measure our love for God!**

I recall the time I was teaching in a Bible School in the Solomon Islands. I asked the students to tell me what they believed God was calling them to be and to do. When one replied that he was called to be a Pastor I asked him, “Do you love people?” He answered, “No!” I was a bit shocked for a minute, then challenged him on this truth. If he did not have a strong love in his heart for people, then he would be a failure as a Pastor. That’s the truth! He did not like my challenge to him.

**Too many Christians are guilty of trying to separate their love for God as being different to loving people. We cannot do it. It is self-deception! And I was guilty of it for the first 16 years of my Christian life and ministry!**

I wonder if you were to put yourself into Peter’s shoes and Jesus was asking you the question: ***“Do you love Me more than these?”*** How would you fare?

Perhaps right now it would be good if you were to put this book down, close your eyes and let Jesus ask you that same question.

Be very honest with your response.

***“Do you love Me more than these?”***

**\* Are you guilty, like Peter, of living your style of Christian life, doing your thing, going where you want to go, doing what you want to do, all in the name of Jesus?**

If you are, the message of the love of God has not yet really got through to you. Love must penetrate our hearts to the point where we demonstrate our love in the feeding of God’s lambs and sheep.

***“How can you say you love God, whom you have not seen, if you do not love your own brothers and sisters whom you have seen?”***

**\* Let the love of God penetrate!**

**\* Stop being religious and get real with people!**

**\* Don't hide any longer!**

**\* Let love reign!**

Someone once made this comment and I have never forgotten it. "We have to live with 'the smell of the sheep' on us." It means that we have to mix with the people, get involved with them, love them and let God use us to bring them through into the place where they can let their love for God be proven in the helping of others. In some way every Christian needs to experience that. Not just the Pastors and those others with full-time ministries.

*"God knows how much I long, with the deepest Christian love and affection, for your companionship. My prayer for you is that you may have still more love ~ a love that is full of knowledge and wise insight. I want you to be able always to recognize the highest and the best, and to live sincere and blameless lives until the day of Jesus Christ. I want to see your lives full of true goodness, produced by the power that Jesus Christ gives you to the praise and glory of God"* (Philippians 1:8-11, J.B. Phillips).

**\* We grow in love.**

It doesn't arrive in one big package and it's there for the rest of our lives. The Apostle Paul prayed that our love would keep growing, above and beyond learning the skills of how to apply it (and when not to apply it).

**\* We soon discover that some people are easier to love than others!**

If we're genuine in our wanting to build better relationships, then we have to work a little bit harder. In some cases a big bit harder! Some people are very protective of themselves and are on the defensive. They do not want you getting too close. But love can break down the barriers, cause them to relax a little, so friendship relationships can be built.

Some people are so insecure in themselves that they will actually try and get you to reject them! They don't really want you to, but they have to know that you are genuine and mean what you say. Don't ever give up on people, even though it is much easier said than done!

**\* Love in action causes the fruits of righteousness to fill our lives.**

The more we release this love to flow out to others, the more we mature as sons and daughters of God. **"God is Love"** ~ therefore His children should also be known by the character of their Father ~ **LOVE**.

Always remember:

**\* It is the Christian who says that he has God's love in him, so make sure the people have an opportunity to see the proof of it!**

Chapter 15  
**LOVE IS THE WAY TO GOD'S FULNESS**

\* **Love is the way to experiencing God's fulness in our lives.**

One of the most challenging sections of Scripture to me is Ephesians 3:14-21:

*“For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom His whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge ~ that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

*Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen” (NIV).*

Here Paul is telling us it is possible for us to comprehend (“to seize upon, lay hold of” - Bullinger’s) with all the saints **all the measurements of the love of God; to know that love that goes beyond knowledge; a love that fills us with all the fulness of God!** The natural mind certainly cannot comprehend it, but the spiritual mind can. **Everything in the kingdom of God is motivated by, and works in, love. Even faith works by love (Galatians 5:6)!**

\* **No wonder Jesus commands us to love one another.**

**Love releases the dynamic of God which reveals to all that we are His disciples, or disciplined ones (John 13:34-35).**

Again we need to be reminded:

\* **It is the demonstration of genuine, practical love of the Christians one for the other that is going to change the world!**

Right now, around the world, there are scores of Christians praying for revival. Revival speaks to different Christians of different things. The revival we need is the revival of demonstrating love to others.

\* **Love and compassion releases the Holy Spirit to work.**

And when we do what He asks us, we cannot help but have revival. The problem is we’d rather pray for it than do it. We’d rather let someone else take the lead than personally take responsibility for obedience to the Word of God. The Bible is very clear that love for God is demonstrated in the keeping, or doing of the Word (John 14:21-24). When we ignore the teachings of Jesus we are declaring an absence or lack of love for Him.

***“And I ask Him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you’ll be able to take in with all Christians the extravagant dimensions of Christ’s love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God”*** (Ephesians 3:18-19, The Message).

Doesn’t this love ~ His love ~ excite you with all the possibilities?

## Chapter 16 **MEETING STRANGERS**

***“Let love be without hypocrisy”*** (Romans 12:9).

**T**he need is for Christians to show our true colours, to be genuine about the Gospel we represent.

***“The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power*** (“dunamis”: “the ability to perform anything; power in action”- Bullinger’s)” (1 Corinthians 4:20).

**\* It’s time to practice what we preach.**

When I first began to express love to people by putting my arm around their shoulders, or giving a hug, some said to me that it would not work in certain cultures. Especially in cultures where there was not even a word for love. I am happy to say that I have now been into some of those cultures and the language of love does work.

**\* Wherever I go, people love to be loved, affirmed, encouraged.**

People hate to be ignored or left to themselves, especially in public meetings. Have you ever observed Christians when a stranger walks into church? Sadly, most do not know how to welcome newcomers. Many do not seem comfortable in introducing themselves to an outsider. Many struggle to carry on a conversation with them. Folks, we have to do better than that. We must show ourselves friendly. I have watched on numbers of occasions how Christians tend to talk to the same people each week at church. Often a small group at that. Sometimes I’ve asked, “Did you talk to that visitor today?” The answer is, “What visitor? I did not see anyone new at church today.” Christians can get so “cliquey” that they don’t even see anyone but their friends. We must always be looking to make new friends, and so extending our love opportunities.

***“Let love for your fellow believers continue and be a fixed practice with you ~ never let it fail. Do not forget or neglect or refuse to extend hospitality to strangers [in the brotherhood] ~ being friendly, cordial and gracious, sharing the comforts of your home and doing your part generously ~ for through it some have entertained angels without knowing it”*** (Hebrews 13:1-2, AMP.).

\* What if you were a visitor, a stranger for the first time to a church ~ your church?

\* Would you be encouraged to go again if you were ignored?

I'm reminded of the time on my first ministry trip to England. While waiting for the service to start I noticed a young couple walk in and sit down. He had a lime green mohawk haircut and leather jacket. She also wore a leather jacket and had rings hanging off many parts of her body. It was very interesting observing the regular church members as they came in. Once they had seen the couple they walked to another part of the hall to sit down. After watching what was happening for a few minutes I went over, introduced myself, made some comments about his hair (jokingly asking him if a haircut like that would suit me!) and let him know that I was pleased to see them there. He responded a little. She only grunted and tried to ignore me. I don't remember what I preached on that morning, but something must have impressed the couple, for they returned again to the evening service. Again I went to talk to them and got a little better reception than I had that morning. As I preached the Holy Spirit gave me a word of knowledge about that young man; how God was going to call him to a unique ministry of reaching a certain type of people most of us would never reach. He lit up and responded in a positive way. At the end of the meeting I went to them again. The young man was now very happy to talk to me, as the word I gave him was received so well by him. I noticed the young lady was hanging onto her partner, so I tried again to strike up a conversation with her. This time I saw some tears forming in her eyes, so called my wife (Jean) over to give her some of her motherly love. When that happened she wept openly. For the first time in many years she was feeling the power of love flowing to her and into her. The fact that we did not re-act negatively to their appearance, that we struck up a conversation with them, showing them how we loved and accepted them as they were, enabled the Holy Spirit to not only use me to minister prophetically into their lives, but earned us the right to take them into our arms and impart God's love into them. It is at times like that when I remember what God said to me back in 1976:

***“I am going to teach you how to love people.”***

And in remembering I give Him thanks for changing my heart and attitudes toward those who are different to me.

***“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers”?***

We have found that angels sometimes come dressed in strange clothes and garish make-up. We must keep working on our attitudes and on developing our people skills if we are going to see the power of God's love released to others in a greater way.

***“And may the Lord make your love to grow and overflow to each other and to everyone else, just as our love does toward you. This will result in your hearts being made strong, sinless and holy by God our Father, so that you may stand before Him guiltless on that day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns with all those who belong to Him”*** (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13, TLB).

This Scripture encourages us to keep increasing ~ or growing ~ our love to one another, and toward all men.

Do not limit your love only to those you find easy to love.

God's love extends to all.



***“Do you love Me? . . . Feed My lambs and sheep.”***

**\* Give yourself a fresh challenge this week!**

Make a definite effort to reach out to someone you don't know well, or don't know at all. You may very well be surprised at the results. Who knows, you could discover a friend for life! Who knows, you may be God's angel on assignment! You may be the answer to someone's prayer, or a channel through which a miracle can flow.

**Do it!**

### Chapter 17

## **SOME MORE TESTIMONY HIGHLIGHTS**

**E**ven though the 1980's were pressure years for us, the Lord continued to work in us, to speak to us and to prepare us for that which was to come. 1984 was especially a year I won't forget. It was a year where I experienced another encounter with God. The Holy Spirit dealt with some areas of my personal life and challenged me to a season of a two-hour-a-day prayer commitment. (My book, "An Encounter With God," tells more of how the Lord spoke to me). At that time the Lord showed me the day was coming when He would release me from the Senior Pastor's role into that of ministering to the world-wide, Body of Christ. It was a real time of renewal for me personally.

Also in 1984 I had a breakthrough in the area of guidance and from a narrow mind-set, which had kept me from going overseas for eight years. Even though I knew the door was open for me to return to Fiji any time I wanted, I got this notion that I would not go anywhere unless I got a specific invitation to do so. It took the then President of the Elim Churches of New Zealand, Ian Bilby, to challenge me on a burden he carried in his heart. While on holiday he had felt the Lord speaking to him about something being wrong in Fiji. Ian had never been to Fiji at that point. The burden wouldn't leave him, so at one of our Leadership Training Camps in Otaki, New Zealand, he gathered a group of men around the supper table, all who had some interest in the Fiji Islands, and shared his burden. Then he said: "There is really only person here who can go to check out the situation in Fiji and that is you, Rodney." He then directly asked me to go to Fiji.

I had wanted to go to Fiji on many occasions during the previous eight years, but that mind-set was blocking me. Now I was being asked to go there by a man who had never been there himself! My reply was that "I'd love to go, but unless God speaks to me I can't." At that camp I was sleeping in an old railway carriage, which I had all to myself. I went to my bunk, buried my head in my pillow and cried out to God to make His will clear. Within fifteen minutes I clearly heard the voice of the Lord:

***“You are to go to Fiji in the month of May, and you're to take Jean with you.”***

Wow! It was already April, so if we were to go, things would have to happen quickly. My logic said, "Jean won't go."

On arriving home I shared with Jean about Ian's burden and how the Lord spoke to me about us both going to Fiji. At the end of my excited speech she replied, "I'll go." That was a wonderful confirmation, for those of you who know my Jean, will know how much she enjoys being at home and involved in her local church.

That night there also happened to be an Elders' Meeting, so I submitted the idea of my going to Fiji to them after telling them of the events of the camp and Jean's willingness to go with me. When I finished explaining, I asked them, "What do you think?"

Two of the elders spoke up simultaneously, saying, "We already know!"

"What do you mean?"

"God has already spoken to us to release you to go to Fiji."

The month of May came quickly and off to Fiji we went. As soon as we met up with our hosts, Jean knew there was something terribly wrong. The longer we stayed (three weeks) the more clear it became. The Founder and Leader of the work was not in a good place with God. People were talking, but were afraid to confront him. We arranged to cancel our last week of meetings and go and spend time with that couple.

They agreed.

But when the time came we were avoided by the husband.

It turned out to be a long, slow week.

However, we knew we needed to confront in love and so prayed for God to give us the right moment. When it came we heard a torrent of negativity and hurt pour out. I explained to him that I had just come from New Zealand where I had been involved in the standing down from ministry of a Pastor for less things than his. Also, that even though I was like a son to that Fiji Missionary couple (they had no children of their own), I had to act impartially in matters like this. I instructed him what he needed to do, and that we were available to help if he wanted it. He heard me out, then said: "I accept what you're saying is true, but I'm not prepared to do anything about it." The next thing I heard myself replying: "Well, Brother, if you in your position as Leader of this work are not prepared to do anything about getting out of the mess you're in, God will remove you."

I was surprised at what I'd said.

From that moment he turned right off me and scarcely spoke another word to me.

It was a terrible time.

I felt I needed to share with two of his leaders what had happened and what had been said. Jean and I then returned to New Zealand.

I had been home about three weeks when the telephone rang. It was one of the two leaders I had shared with in Fiji. He said to me: "Brother, the Word of the Lord has come to pass today."

I replied, "What are you talking about?"

"Brother \_\_\_\_\_ died this morning!"

The news hit me hard.

Tears coursed down my face as I tried to comprehend what the Fijian leader was saying. The thoughts rushing through my mind were on the power of the Word of God. I knew God had judged the situation and had removed the non-repentant leader. **That experience gave me an awesome respect of the power of the prophetic word.**

It was a sobering experience to realize my words had come to pass so quickly.

I returned to Fiji to conduct the very large funeral.

Friends, don't play around with God. Know that He means what He says and declares in His Word. The grace of God goes out to you right now, so don't abuse it.

There are times when we have to *“speak the truth in love”* (Ephesians 4:15).

I know in each encounter I've had with God over the years, He always shows me my own heart (which I never like seeing) in order to show me His possibilities for me if I will respond to Him.

**\* If we don't see our own heart as God sees it, we will never feel the need to change.**

For those of us who are leaders in God's kingdom, we have extra responsibility to respond to God's dealings with us.

Since the removal of that leader in Fiji in 1984 we have watched that group of churches grow considerably in the numbers of churches planted. They have a great future yet as they will keep responding to the Holy Spirit's guidance. The lesson here is that God will remove people if they become an ongoing hindrance to what He wants to do.

As we entered into the 1990's it appeared that everything was in place for me to move out of Pastoring into the next stage to which God was calling me. However, it did not happen as I thought it would. I just ran out of energy and could not carry on. The more I believed to get better, the worse I got. I had no choice but to lay everything afresh upon God's altar. As the news got out, the Christian “experts” began expressing their opinions as to the reason I was as I was. Their opinions fell into three categories:

1. The Satanists have cursed you.
2. It's your own fault (for not taking more time out).
3. God is at work to bring about change.

If we wanted to analyze those three opinions in the light of the things we had been through, we could see how people came to those conclusions. We did not accept the first one, because we had learned that:

***“You are of God little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is within you, than he that is in the world”*** (1 John 4:4, KJV).

We also knew that ***“the curse causeless cannot come”*** (Proverbs 26:2).

The Satanists were regularly praying against us. We had knowledge of that. (Some later told us of their involvement to “take us out.”) We could accept the second opinion, for we have not been good at taking time out from ministry. But, at the end of the day and, in the light of a number of things we went through, we came to the conclusion that it was really God at work, to wean us, redirect us and help us to make the decision to leave Palmerston North. Both of us had been in the city or surrounding area all of our lives and in the church for over 30 years. It was now time to move on.

We had believed we were to relocate to the Fiji Islands to help the work there and also to reach

out to the other Pacific nations. Three months prior to our planned departure date and, while we were in Dunedin itinerating to raise support, the Lord began to challenge us about our willingness to lay down the Fiji call. A series of events quickly happened that confirmed a change of direction was about to take place. It did and we finished up in Hamilton, New Zealand, a city of more than 110,000. We had six years of happy, fulfilling ministry, working out from the church here before nearly two difficult years that were to force us into another major change.

1995 was the year when God opened new doors for me to minister in the Northern Hemisphere. Prior to that I knew we were going to minister in USA and Great Britain. We had an opportunity to go in 1994, but I turned it down, as by then I knew we were to go in 1995. Doors opened for us to go to Hawaii, on to mainland USA, Canada, Great Britain, Switzerland and Malaysia. We were away for ten weeks.

Two weeks before leaving on that trip I was in an Elders Meeting. We were in prayer about matters to do with the church. The next thing I was in the Spirit and saw myself standing, preaching in a church in Hawaii, ministering to a lady in a blue dress. She had a wounded spirit. God gave me a sign that when I saw her compassion would well up inside of me and tears would run down my face. Even though I had never preached in Hawaii before, I knew I was there, and knew God wanted to set a lady free of a wounded spirit. When it was over and the prayer time stopped, I said to the rest of the Eldership, "I don't know where you people have been, but I've just been to Hawaii!"

Prior to our leaving we had a Regional Training Weekend. The Holy Spirit challenged me to tell the people (about 130 of them) what was going to happen in Hawaii. I didn't want to, as I knew that on our arrival home in New Zealand from that trip people would be asking, "What about the lady in the blue dress?" I reasoned that if it didn't happen I would look foolish! So much for logic! But I told them anyway. It pays to obey.

I preached in only one church in Hawaii on that trip. When I faced the congregation and began to speak I was amazed at the numbers of women wearing blue dresses that day! Yet, as I preached, I had this growing sense of destiny, that I was in the right place at the right time with the right message for the right person. Slowly I let my eyes and spirit work together to help me find the right blue-dressed lady. When I saw her I felt this surge of compassion well-up in me and tears came into my eyes. This was the moment God had sent me thousands of miles for. I stopped preaching, walked down the aisle to where that lady and her husband were sitting, and shared with them and the church what the Holy Spirit had shown me back in New Zealand.

Now there were three of us crying.

Then I began to speak to that precious lady, Jo Lynn Franks:

"Listen, I want you to be really honest with me, Sister. Have you known what it is to be deeply hurt? I just want to say to you today, there are parts of that hurt that you have never recovered from yet, and I'm here for you today. Two weeks ago in New Zealand, I was sitting in an Eldership Meeting when I was suddenly (in the Spirit) in Hawaii ministering to a lady in a blue dress with a wounded spirit. I saw myself with tears running down my face, and this was the sign to me that you are that woman. Today I want to tell you that Jesus wants to break you free of all that past hurt. That this is a new day for you . . . Oh, God! How you have cried for Him to raise you up. Oh, God! How you have longed to be able to rise and to be that woman that your spirit

tells you that you can be.

Is this right?

And the Holy Spirit wants you to know that all the time He has been with you, and He loves you, and He cares for you my Sister. And today, if you will let me, I would like to pray for you. Is that alright, Sir?" (speaking to Bob, her husband). "Just reach your hand toward this precious lady, folks. The Holy Spirit wants to do something really special.

"Oh, Father, I thank You for this precious lady. I thank You, Jesus, that today You are mindful of every part of our lives, and in Jesus' name, my Sister, I set you free from every trace of a wounded spirit that has stopped you from rising to the heights that your spirit has cried out to rise to. In the name of Jesus I release you from that! This is a new day for you to arise in Jesus! Yes, my Sister, ***'Arise and shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you'*** (Isaiah 60:1). This is a new day for you if you can accept it, and will believe the promise of God to rise. You shall rise to levels you have never touched before in your God, and you will minister in the power and anointing and the glory of your God, just as your spirit has longed to. For this is the day of the Lord's visitation to you . . . . And yes, you shall know what it is . . . you will know what it is to be able to see into the hearts of people and to see those, especially those that are hurting, and you will know how to embrace them. You will know how to shed tears for them. You will know how to heal them in My name, says the Lord, for I am releasing you to bring healing to My body. Oh, yes! In Jesus' name, in Jesus' name! Thank You, Father . . . . Oh, heal, Jesus! . . . . lift that scar off the spirit, let it be healed in Jesus' mighty name." (The above has been taken off the tape.)

It was a wonderful moment in God.

After the service we were taken out to lunch with Bob, Jo Lynn and the Pastor's wife, Darlene Walker. Jo Lynn shared her heart with us. A few years before, as a single young woman, she had become close to the leaders of a world-renowned Christian ministry in mainland USA. So close, in fact, that the leader and his wife called on her to baby-sit their children. She was soon introduced to the Associate Leader's family and began baby-sitting for them. At first it was only on weekends, but then they began to call on her one night a week, then two, then three. Not knowing how to say no to them, slowly but surely that kind-hearted lady was becoming a slave within the Christian organisation she worked for. Something had to snap, which it did, and she had to give up the work she had loved. But that ordeal had left her with a wounded spirit.

Then she said some amazing things. She said: "You know, I really thought I was healed of that wounded spirit, but two weeks ago something happened in my life that made me realize I wasn't. And this horrible realization settled on me. That not only was I not healed, but I didn't know how to get healed."

"Two weeks ago" was the time when the Holy Spirit was revealing to me far away in New Zealand what He was sending us to Hawaii for.

Isn't God good?!

Then she went on to tell us, "Here's another interesting thing. I never wear blue. Blue is not my colour. But last week my father sent to me from USA a box with two new dresses. This dress was one of them. I wore it today to honour my father."

Before she even received that dress in the mail the Holy Spirit knew she would wear it in church that day and showed me to look for a lady in a blue dress. Just goes to show you, folks, God already knows what clothes you'll be wearing two weeks from today! So, why worry?



Jo Lynn shared this with me. “About two weeks before you came to Kauai (Hawaii), I had been hurt by a lady in our home Bible Study Group. I don’t remember now what it was about, but what I do remember is that it brought back a flood of hurts that I had experienced in Texas. I had no idea that they were still there and to such a degree.

I have a very giving and loving nature and sometimes when you give to others they take advantage of you. I have had a lot of people take advantage of my giving nature over and over again, and it had left a lot of scars. I thought I was over them, but when a very small incident happened in Kauai, all of the pain from those past hurts came flooding back. I knew God didn’t want me to have unforgiveness and I began seeking Him and praying for the pain to go away. I had no idea that He loved me so much that He would speak to a Pastor thousands of miles away, just to let me know that HE LOVED ME!

I am so thankful that the Lord did release me of all those past hurts and I do have a real heart for those who have been hurt!

You were correct when you said there were many ladies in blue that day. I had some ladies come up to me and show me their blue dresses after church. I only had my outfit for a few days. It was the first time I had worn it to church. The Lord knew every detail!”

That experience so encouraged me. I left Hawaii on a real high on our way to mainland USA. In my ignorance I had accepted an invitation to speak in one meeting at a Ministers’ and Missionaries Conference in Columbus, Georgia. When I accepted that invitation I thought Columbus was somewhere near Los Angeles! One day, after I had accepted, I thought I had better get a map and find out exactly where Columbus was.

Yikes!

It was across the other side of USA!

What were we to do?

By faith we decided to go and see what God would do.

We had quite a long stopover at Los Angeles, so we took a hotel and tried to catch-up on some sleep. At about 7:45 p.m. I woke up, sat bolt upright in bed with the word of the Lord for that Conference in Columbus. It was a revelation on “The Conflicts of The Call of God from the Life of the Prophet Jonah.” I was the second-to-last speaker at that Conference, a total unknown to all but the convenor. When I spoke, I poured my heart out to those precious leaders who had travelled from far and wide. The word of knowledge, the word of wisdom and discerning of spirits began flowing out of me and all over the meeting people were openly weeping. God was speaking to them. That one meeting opened the door for me to return in 1997 to be the guest speaker at another of those Conferences, which was held in Enterprise, Alabama.

From Columbus we flew to Dallas, Texas, where I had been invited to minister at “Christ For The Nations” for several days. That was such a wonderful, awesome time for us. To be a part of a large campus, inputting into more than 1,100 students, was a privilege we have treasured ever since. God used us to be a blessing to so many.

That first visit to “Christ For The Nations” was especially important to Jean and me. The invitation to go there had come at a crucial time in our lives after we had put out “a fleece” to



find out whether or not God wanted us to continue to major in our ministry here in New Zealand, or to launch out further afield more on the international scene. Things had transpired that it seemed to us that man had “interfered” with the fleece process and it had upset us somewhat. We had to lay everything down on God’s altar once more. The very same day that we completed the last task involved in doing that, I came home to find a fax waiting for me. It was the invitation to go to “Christ For The Nations” to minister.

Me!

A Kiwi from New Zealand!

Again God showed us He can open the right doors at the right time for the doing of His will. How thrilling it is to know for sure that God is working on your case! Let us never forget that God always was, always is, and always will be, bigger than man’s methods and plans!

(It was my privilege to return to “Christ For The Nations” for my second time of ministry in March, 1998. The Lord used me to speak prophetically into the lives of some key leaders, as well as a number of the students.)

We ministered in different parts of USA over a period of a month before flying to Canada for a few days and then onto Great Britain where I represented the New Zealand Elim Churches at the U.K. Elim Ministers’ Conference at Prestatyn, Wales. An itinerary had been arranged for me to speak before and during the Conference.

Our first introduction to the U.K. was a really blessed one. I found my ministry was very well received and the people were hungry for Holy Spirit ministry. The Conference itself was a great experience. There was a very strong move of God’s Spirit and an awareness of His presence. One night I will not forget in a long time. I was sitting on the platform in the second row behind five of the top Elim men. A crowd of over 1,000 were enjoying a fantastic meeting, worshipping and singing from their hearts. Then, over the noise of the people, I heard a growing roaring sound. It seemed as though it was coming down from the ceiling on the right hand side of the building from where I was sitting. There was a whoosh and the five men and their chairs were swept sideways into a heap of men, chairs, microphones and cords! It was a sovereign display of the power of God, and it happened right in front of me ~ two feet away! The meeting was electric. Yes, I was pleased to be there ~ and that close.

Why things like that happen I don’t always know.

But I’m glad they do.

We need to experience more of the awesome sovereignty of God!

During that Conference I was privileged to speak in five meetings. One at 7:00 a.m. together with four in the big tent in the afternoons. Apart from the churches I had ministered in prior to the Conference I was a virtual unknown as a speaker. The first tent meeting was about a quarter-full. The second about half-full. The third about two-thirds full. But in that third meeting something wonderful happened. As I was preaching I had this sense that there were numbers of people receiving words from the Holy Spirit to share. So I asked for those who were receiving things in the Spirit to put their hands up. About 30 hands went up. That was it for preaching that day. The rest of the time was taken up in getting those people to share their words, prophecies and other revelations. Every word evoked an immediate response. Something was released in the Holy Spirit that afternoon. The fourth meeting was packed, with people standing around the

inside of the tent. What a difference the ministry of the Holy Spirit makes!

From Great Britain we flew to Zurich, Switzerland, for six days. A young couple, who had gone out from the Hamilton Elim Church (New Zealand), were actively involved in pioneering an English-speaking church and helping in a growing youth outreach. For some months the Leadership had been praying for a breakthrough in the Holy Spirit and it happened while we were there. In one of those meetings we again sensed that the Holy Spirit was working amongst the people, giving them words of knowledge. When I enquired as to who was receiving words, about 30 hands went up. It was great seeing and hearing those people sharing what the Lord had given them. Some had received several words of knowledge to share. That evening was the launching pad to bring about the releasing of the Gifts of the Spirit in that young church. Today, that young couple, Tony and Anita Donaldson, are back in Hamilton. Tony is a key member of "The GFM" Team, handling the accounts, financial transactions, stirring vision and preparing for further Holy Spirit ministry with us.

One more stop on that world trip took us to Malaysia (where I had been twice before). There, I was the speaker at a "Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship" Banquet in Ipoh, as well as speaking in the "Canning Garden Baptist Church."

Since that trip I have now ministered several times in USA and UK. Each time the Lord has blessed and challenged me with the great need for equipping the saints.

In the second half of 1995 God began to speak to me about the possibilities of running short term, up to 12-day "International Training Schools," where different nationalities could come together to have intense impacting times of improving Leadership skills, learning to recognize character traits and getting Christians released into the prophetic ministries. I began to share my concept with several fellow Pastors and, each time, I had a very positive response. After a time of prayer and further discussion, a team came together who wanted to be a part of the equipping process. A process which included placing a teaching manual into the hands of everyone who would attend an ITS.

Not long after, I was recommended by a leader in the UK (Rev. T. Gordon Hills) to a leader in the Philippines (Bishop James Isaguirre). He invited me to run an ITS in Manila in 1996. That became our opportunity to see how the concept would work. Seven leaders went from New Zealand to conduct the 12-day ITS, which was very successful.

Over 200 Filipino leaders attended.

A manual was produced and is currently being used all over the Philippines, and has since been distributed to other countries.

We launched the ITS in New Zealand in 1997 and it went very well. Numbers flew in from other nations and New Zealand. Pastors have commented on the positive changes they've seen in their people that have attended.

Currently the ITS (now known as Prophetic Equipping Schools) is run in other nations (with varying lengths of time) under the vision statement of "Equipping For Leadership in the Nations Through the Power of The Holy Spirit." For me, that statement is very important. If the Christian Church doesn't place a high priority on equipping its people with leadership skills, we are planning to fail. We will never be able to hold any fruit in revival. We will remain locked up in a "playing church" mentality.

As I grow older, my heart desires to be more and more involved in the equipping of people. Some of the highlights of my ministry are found there. My heart is to see others have the privileges I have had in the ministry. I love to see men and women ‘make it good’ in God!

**\* Love equips!**

## Chapter 18 **OBSERVING THE APOSTLE PAUL**

It is very interesting to observe the character and heart-beat of the men and women of the Bible. When I was a young Christian I used to hear some describe the Apostle Paul as a bit of a “hard man” and a “woman hater.” As I have meditated on his teachings and life, I have found him to be quite different. He was a genuine “heart man” who really desired the very best for those he mentored in the faith. He had so much to say on the subject of our loving one another, of how important it is. This chapter is devoted to some of his teachings on love.

It is about such an issue that he declared:

*“And now I will show you the most excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing”* (1 Corinthians 13:1-3, NIV).

**\* He knew that genuine love in our hearts for God ~ and one another ~ is more important than all the spiritual “heights” to which one can rise.**

We should all covet the ability to speak in the tongues of men and angels, flow in the gift of prophecy, fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, have a faith that commanded mountains to move, feed the poor and even sacrifice our life unto death. **It is a very sobering thought that it is actually possible to achieve all those spiritual things, yet at the same time to be devoid of love. This should cause us to look very carefully at our priorities.**

Paul was not anti those things. He knew only too well that in the absence of true, genuine love, we would be opening ourselves up to a wrong emphasis, even deception.

**\* Love always makes the motivation right.**

He gave his life to help others come into those powerful giftings from God. He lived to see others effectively trained in the matters of God. In matters of the Holy Spirit ministry. For example; look at his heart cry when he said:

*“For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end you may be established”* (Romans 1:11, KJV).

Think of what he was saying here. He earnestly desired (that's a strong language of love) to be with people in order that he could share, pass on and impart those things that he had received himself, and which made him successful in his ministry to them.

**\* He saw the importance of imparting spiritual gifts through a love motivation.**

The end result was the establishing (i.e. the firm implantation) of usefulness into the lives of those who received from Paul's life, ministry and example. Because he so loved people, he desired to share with them everything he had received from God! That's a genuine love.

**\* Are we guilty in our day of sacrificing genuine love relationships in our pursuit of spirituality?**

**\* Why is it that so many Christians are afraid to love?**

**\* Why is it that we are often weak in the area of reaching out to build friendships?**

**\* Why is it that many are reluctant to open their hearts and homes to those outside their small circle of contacts?**

Sometimes the reasons lay in issues resulting from previous attempts at building relationships that have failed and proven hurtful. The resulting rejection has caused numbers to withdraw into a more isolated life-style, which brings no real enjoyment.

Loneliness follows.

Negative mind-sets develop.

We become more and more introverted.

All of these things work against our reaching out to build genuine friendships based on love, trust and respect. All of which we need to have for each other. It's a two-way street!

**\* Every Christian should be very good at loving others!**

Because of what Christ has done for us, and His Spirit now having taken up residence within us (Colossians 1:27; John 14:23), we are free to walk in His kingdom principles.

**\* The Number One principle is *loving!***

**\* It comes before anything and everything else!**

**\* It is the most excellent way!**

**\* There is nothing more important, or urgent!**

Yet it seems that we are happy to carry on seeking to better ourselves, focusing in on our selfish needs, studying the Bible, singing, praying and praising, **rather than accepting the truth that we only love God as much as we love one another. That's the proof of Christianity.**

Don't forget that it was **Jesus** who told us the way the world would recognize that we are His disciples is by **our love one for the other** (John 13:34-35).

Not our good works, worship, prayers, meetings and other good Christian activities in which we might be involved.

**\* Our love for one another!**

This comes through strongly in Paul's teachings.  
He said:

\* *"Serve one another in love"* (Galatians 5:13, NIV).

\* *"May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you"* (1 Thessalonians 3:12, NIV).

\* *"Regarding life together and getting along with each other, you don't need me to tell you what to do. You're God-taught in these matters. Just love one another! You're already good at it; your friends all over the province of Macedonia are the evidence. Keep it up; get better and better at it"* (1 Thessalonians 4:9, The Message).

Modern Christianity appears to have fallen a long way short on this. However, I believe the Holy Spirit is speaking to us ~ stirring us ~ to get our priorities right and into Biblical order.

**Love must come first on our list!**

\* *"Don't just pretend that you love others: really love them . . . Love each other with brotherly affection and take delight in honouring each other"* (Romans 12:9-10, TLB).

The Amplified says: *"[Let your] love be sincere - a real thing . . . Love one another with brotherly affection ~ as members of one family ~ giving precedence and showing honour to one another."*

\* **People know when our love is genuine.**

\* **It speaks louder than our words and reveals itself through our body language and actions.**

Recently I was ministering at a church camp and had a number of young people in the 12-17 age group come one after the other for prayer. They were responding to my love more than my preaching. I couldn't help notice that when I prayed and put my hand on their head, or my arms around their shoulders, or embraced them, they put their arms around me and hugged me. There was a powerful flow of the love of God passing between us.

\* **They longed to be loved!**

\* **To feel the powerful love of God.**

The age barriers disappear, the differences melt away when we can minister the love that comes

from the Father's heart. The tears flowed freely. Not tears of sin, discouragement or disappointment, but tears of joy in response to God's love for them. Those are beautiful moments in God, and I treasure them dearly.

Paul had further things to say about love:

**\* *“Long ago, even before He made the world, God chose us to be His very own, through what Christ would do for us; He decided then to make us holy in His eyes, without a single fault ~ we who stand before Him covered with His love. His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into His own family by sending Jesus Christ to die for us. And He did this because He wanted to. Now all praise to God for His wonderful kindness to us and His favour that He has poured out upon us, because we belong to His dearly loved Son. So overflowing is His kindness towards us that He took away all our sins through the blood of His Son, by whom we are saved; and He has showered down upon us the richness of His grace ~ for how well He understands us and knows what is best for us at all times”*** (Ephesians 1:4-8, TLB).

Look at the love of God that pours through Paul's anointed words!

We are covered with God's love!

Isn't it therefore a very natural thing for us who are a part of God's great family of love, that the same love should be flowing out from us to touch others?

**\* *“Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love”*** (Ephesians 4:2, TLB).

**\* *“Follow God's example in everything you do just as a much loved child imitates his father. Be full of love for others, following the example of Christ who loved you and gave Himself to God as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, for Christ's love for you was like sweet perfume to Him”*** (Ephesians 5:1-2, TLB).

The Message puts it this way:

**\* *“Watch what God does, and then you do it, like children who learn proper behaviour from their parents. Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with Him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn't love in order to get something from us but to give everything of Himself to us. Love like that.”***

Paul endeavoured to live and love like that. He knew there was no greater way to serve God, to please God, or to honour God. Likewise he knew there was no greater impact that could be made than to demonstrate God's love to men and women everywhere in a love-starved world.

It is no different today.

People everywhere are crying out for a true expression of love.

They long to be accepted and understood; to be loved.

They are tired of the world's cheap counterfeit which the Bible calls lust.

The challenge for us is to be aware of the fact that it is only the Spirit-filled Christian, made clean and new by the powerful blood of Jesus shed on Calvary that can in any way demonstrate the true love of God. **“God is love”** and, to love truthfully, we must know the God of Love,



living in our hearts. The “Father’s heart” must beat in us. It must so impact us that we see others through His loving heartbeat. Life, ministry and our effectiveness as Christians and as individuals, all function much more powerfully when we are motivated by the love of 1 Corinthians 13.

**\* How well do you express your love?**

Do you struggle with, or do you know, that beautiful freedom in the Holy Spirit to freely express His love to others?

My plea to the Christians world-wide is that we return to our **“first love”** that is spoken about in Revelation 2:1-7. That was the time in our life when nothing was too much bother when the opportunity came to serve God, or to serve people. We had not yet experienced some of the disappointments that come our way when we put ourselves out for God and others. We hadn’t faced the mis-understandings and criticisms that happened when we sought to please, but had our efforts misconstrued. The resulting hurts and discouragements had not yet spoiled our desire to serve, or yet damaged our tender spirits. This is the challenge of love. To rise again, to reach out, even when we feel we are going to be hurt even further!

**\* It’s not the easy way, but it is the right way.**

**\* It is the Jesus way.**

When we are not flowing in our **“first love”** it is because we have fallen from our **“first works”** (Revelation 2:2-5, KJV).

The Word of God challenges us to put first things first!

The first thing is to **“Love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind; and to love our neighbour as ourself.”**

**There is nothing greater than these two Commandments! Jesus would not separate them and nor can we. Love for God is demonstrated in our love for people: our fellow human beings “who have been made in God’s likeness”** (James 3:9, NIV).

The Apostle Paul showed great admiration and gratitude to other believers. He spoke it out to the point where it has been captured into the pages of Biblical Scripture. We can learn from him and likewise carry a similar heart of love for fellow believers in our day and generation.

Listen to his heartbeat as he makes the following statements in the Book of Romans:

**\* “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all . . .”** (Romans 1:8, KJV).

**\* “God, Whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the Gospel of His Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayer at all times; and I pray that now at last by God’s will the way may be opened for me to come to you. I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong ~ that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith. I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I**

*planned many times to come to you . . .”* (Romans 1:9-13, NIV).

**\* *“And patience develops strength of character in us and helps us trust God more each time we use it until finally our hope and faith are strong and steady. Then, when that happens, we are able to hold our heads high no matter what happens and know that all is well, for we know how dearly God loves us, and we feel this warm love everywhere within us because God has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His love”*** (Romans 5:4-5, TLB).

Knowing that God loves us, and is totally committed to us, gives us tremendous confidence. So many doubt the love of God for them! Let us not do that any longer but know the total commitment of His love for us. It has been said that if you or I were the only ones on this earth, God would still have sent His very best and only Son (Jesus) to die for us! So much is His love to us!

**\* Know also that Jesus has never loved you more than He loves you right now!**

***“Let us have no imitation Christian love. Let us have a genuine break with evil and a real devotion to good. Let us have real warm affection for one another as between brothers, and a willingness to let the other man have the credit. Let us not allow slackness to spoil our work and let us keep the fires of the spirit burning, as we do our work for God”*** (Romans 12:9-11, J.B. Phillips).

Christian love must be real.

**\* There is no room for cheap imitation.**

It is something which we must continually keep working at. Relationships have to become strong enough to survive the many testings that come our way; those which come to cause separation and division. These always cause hurt, and hurt makes us withdraw and become isolated from the “Body of Christ.”

***“Dearly beloved . . .”*** (Romans 12:19, KJV).

***“I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love that the Spirit gives: join me in praying fervently to God for me. Pray that I may be kept safe from the unbelievers in Judaea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to God’s people there. And so I will come to you full of joy, if it is God’s will, and enjoy a refreshing visit to you”*** (Romans 15:30-32, GNB).

When we walk in ***“the love that the Spirit gives”*** we long to renew fellowship with those we know in the Lord. I know for me, I always long to return to places around the world where I have previously ministered. Why? Because I have had the privilege of meeting very precious people there and have grown to love them in a real way. Whenever those times happen, it is always ***“a refreshing visit.”***

***“Phoebe, a dear Christian woman from the town of Cenchrea, will be coming to see you soon.***

*She has worked hard in the church there. Receive her as your sister in the Lord, giving her a warm Christian welcome. Help her in every way you can, for she has helped many in their needs, including me” (Romans 16:1-2, TLB).*

*“Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: who have for my life laid down their own necks . . .” (Romans 16:3-4, KJV).*

J.B. Phillips Translation puts it this way:

*“Shake hands for me with Priscilla and Aquila. They have not only worked with me for Christ, but they have faced death for my sake. Not only I, but all the Gentile Churches, owe them a great debt. Give my love to the little church that meets in their house.”*

Here, Paul acknowledges the true love-motivated ministry of Priscilla and Aquila. They were living according to the principles of 1 John 3:14-16. In their genuine love they were willing to lay down their lives for their Christian friends.

*“Say ‘hello’ to Ampliatus, whom I love as one of God’s own children” (Romans 16:8, TLB).*

*“. . . and beloved Stachys” (Romans 16:9, TLB).*

*“Then there is Apelles, a good man whom the Lord approves; greet him for me” (Romans 16:10a, TLB).*

*“And give my best regards to those working at the house of Aristobulus” (Romans 16:10b, TLB).*

*“Remember me to Herodion my relative” (Romans 16:11a, TLB).*

*“Remember me to the Christian slaves over at Narcissus House” (Romans 16:11b, TLB).*

*“Greet Rufus for me, whom the Lord picked out to be His very own; and also his dear mother who has been such a mother to me” (Romans 16:13, TLB).*

*“Give my love to Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and to Olympas, and all the Christians who are with them” (Romans 16:15, TLB).*

The aforementioned Scriptures give us a clear understanding of the heart of Paul. He loved the Roman Christians! Their love and fellowship meant so much to him. No doubt his love and fellowship meant so very much to them too.

**\* They knew genuine love relationships!**

Paul’s love was not confined to the Roman believers. We see a little of the tremendous love relationship he had with the Christians at Ephesus through the following verses of Scripture:

***“And when they arrived he said to them: You yourselves are well acquainted with my manner of living among you from the first day . . . How I did not shrink back from telling you anything that was for your benefit . . . And now, observe, I perceive that all of you, among whom I have gone in and out preaching the kingdom, will see my face no more. Therefore I testify and protest to you on this [our parting] day that I am clean and innocent and not responsible for the blood of any of you . . . Take care and be on guard for yourselves and the whole flock . . . to shepherd the church (that is, tend and feed and guide the church) . . . Therefore be always alert and on your guard, being mindful that for three years I never stopped night or day seriously to admonish and advise and exhort you one by one with tears. And now, brethren, I commit you to God ~ that is, I deposit you in His charge, entrusting you to His protection and care.***

***. . . You yourselves know personally that these hands have ministered to my own needs and those [of the persons] who were with me . . . Having spoken thus, he knelt down with them all and prayed. And they all wept freely and threw their arms around Paul’s neck and kissed him fervently and repeatedly, Being especially distressed and sorrowful because he had stated that they were about to see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship”*** (Acts 20:18-38, AMP.).

What a powerfully emotional scene that was! The one who had poured out so much of his life into those Christians was now about to depart out of their lives for the last time. I can imagine that the departure took a considerable period of time as the people and Paul hugged and kissed each other repeatedly. Love had grown strongly between them over the previous three years, to the point that to entertain the thought of Paul leaving them for good was a very difficult and emotionally upsetting time. Those leaving with Paul expressed it in a very feeling kind of way:

***“And when we had torn ourselves away from them and withdrawn . . .”*** (Acts 21:1, AMP.).

I often find the departing times in Christian ministry to be very hard. Having spent time ministering God’s Word, imparting His love and ministry gifts among the many nationalities, one does build up close relationships with individuals and churches and people groups. I find that I can build close relationships very quickly and so it is always difficult for me to say “Good-bye” to my new-found friends. I often have to ***“tear myself away.”*** For that reason there is always a strong desire for me to return to those places again, because I long to renew the fellowship and friendships with those I have previously met. There’s no doubt that love and compassion in one’s life means that the departure times are often tearful ones. To this day I still correspond with scores of people in many countries by letter and E-Mail, as I desire to develop and continue genuine love relationships to the glory of God.

Paul’s love was shown to the church at Philippi.

Let’s glean a little of his heart from the book of Philippians:

***“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you . . . for your fellowship*** (“act of partaking, sharing, i.e. partnership, communion” - Bullinger’s) ***in the Gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that He Who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: Even as it is meet*** (“just, right” - Strong’s) ***for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart . . .”*** (Philippians 1:3-7, KJV).

*“How natural it is that I should feel as I do about you, for you have a very special place in my heart. We have shared together the blessings of God, both when I was in prison and when I was out, defending the truth and telling others about Christ. Only God knows how deep is my love and longing for you ~ with the tenderness of Jesus Christ. My prayer for you is that you will overflow more and more with love for others, and at the same time keep on growing in spiritual knowledge and insight, for I want you always to see clearly the difference between right and wrong, and to be inwardly clean, no one being able to criticize you from now until our Lord returns. May you always be doing those good, kind things which show you are a child of God, for this will bring much praise and glory to the Lord”* (Philippians 1:7-11, TLB).

With a heart like that, is it any wonder that the people listened to Paul’s teachings, responded to them and grew in their walk with God!

- \* **Love opens hearts, opens doors and releases ministries.**
- \* **Love makes us to consider the other person.**
- \* **Love is not selfishly motivated.**
- \* **Love always wants to do the best for others.**
- \* **Love in action is what demonstrates to others that we are the children of God!**

*“Therefore, my dear ones . . .”* (Philippians 2:12, AMP).

*“Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved”* (Philippians 4:1, KJV).

Stop for a few moments and consider the strong feelings of love Paul expresses here in these verses. There has obviously been a powerful knitting together of hearts as true brothers and sisters in the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Here’s another expression of Philippians 4:1:

*“My dear, dear friends! I love you so much. I do want the very best for you. You make me feel such joy, fill me with such pride. Don’t waver. Stay on track, steady in God”* (The Message).

Won’t it be great when the Christians finally get their act together! Think what church and fellowship meetings would be like if we all came together with the kind of feeling for one another as Paul expresses here in Philippians 4:1. The power, the ecstasy, the health, the wealth of such relationships and fellowships! I would like to think that we will see such demonstrations of Christian love before Jesus returns.

Why not?

**It really should be “the norm” right now!**

Paul’s heart of love for people is revealed again in his writings to the church at Thessalonica:

*“We loved you dearly ~ so dearly that we gave you not only God’s message, but our own lives too. Don’t you remember, dear brothers, how hard we worked among you? Night and day we toiled and sweated to earn enough to live on so that our expenses would not be a burden to anyone there, as we preached God’s Good News among you. You yourselves are our witnesses ~ as is God ~ that we have been pure and honest and faultless toward every one of you. We talked to you as a father to his own children ~ don’t you remember? ~ pleading with you, encouraging you and even demanding that your daily lives should not embarrass God, but bring joy to Him who invited you into His kingdom to share His glory . . .*

*And then, dear brothers . . .*

*Dear brothers, after we left you and had been away from you but a very little while (though our hearts never left you), we tried hard to come back to see you once more. We wanted very much to come and I, Paul, tried again and again, but Satan stopped us. For what is it we live for, that gives us hope and joy and is our proud reward and crown? It is you! Yes, you will bring us much joy as we stand together before our Lord Jesus Christ when He comes back again. For you are our trophy and joy” (1 Thessalonians 2:8-20, TLB).*

Paul’s reward would be to see those people he loved very dearly standing with him before the Lord at His coming. He was not ministering and sweating throughout his life with his eye on a heavenly crown alone. No, he knew that Christianity is all about loving God and people. He knew and understood the Biblical principle that he only loved God as much as he loved people. And again and again in his writings he expresses his great love for the people. As we look at his love ~ and measure it ~ we can only conclude that Paul the Apostle loved God very very much.

**\* How much do you love God?**

**\* How much do I love God?**

**\* The answer is found in how much we love people!**

*“May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you” (1 Thessalonians 3:12, NIV).*

The Amplified Bible adds another word:

*“And may the Lord make you to increase and excel and overflow in love for one another and for all people, just as we also do for you.”*

It is the word “excel” and it means:

\* “To superabound ~ in quantity or quality ~ make abound, have, have more abundant, exceed, increase” (Strong’s);

\* “To be superior to (another or others); surpass. To be outstandingly good or proficient” (Collins).

**That’s how our love for one another should be!**

**Excelling!**

**Excellent!**



*“Next, as regards brotherly love, you don’t need any written instructions. God Himself is teaching you to love each other, and you are already extending your love to all the Macedonians. Yet we urge you to have more and more of this love, and to make it your ambition to have no ambition! Be busy with your own affairs and do your work yourselves. The result will be a reputation for honesty in the world outside and an honourable independence”* (1 Thessalonians 4:9-12, J.B. Phillips).

\* **Increasing love!**

\* **Excelling love!**

\* **Testimonial love that impacts the world!**

\* **John 13:34-35 kind of love!**

*“Greet all the Christians there with a holy embrace”* (1 Thessalonians 5: 26, The Message).

Throughout Paul’s writings he emphasizes the need for Christians to be genuine and honest in their love relationships. A holy embrace is just one expression of that. Several other translations use the terminology: *“Greet one another with a holy kiss”* (NIV) or *“a sacred kiss”* (AMP.). I have found there to be various “freedoms” in expressing greetings through *“the holy kiss.”* Some cultures are quite open in doing that, while others are much more traditional and conservative, keeping to the formal handshake. It’s what is in the heart that really counts. For me . . . I’m adaptable and am happy to conform with whatever is acceptable to those I am amongst. I do not usually have a problem in expressing love to people in a variety of ways.

In Paul’s letter to Timothy he gives a special mention of Onesiphorus and his family:

*“May the Lord grant [His] mercy to the family of Onesiphorus, for he often showed me kindness and ministered to my needs ~ comforting and reviving and bracing me like fresh air! He was not ashamed of my chains and imprisonment [for Christ’s sake]. No, rather when he reached Rome he searched diligently and eagerly for me and found [me]. May the Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord on that [great] day! And you know how many things he did for me and what a help he was at Ephesus better [than I can tell you]”* (2 Timothy 1:16-18, AMP.).

Here we have an example of love and gratitude for a family that stood with a brother when others had forsaken him. Onesiphorus demonstrated love, faithfulness, loyalty and commitment to Paul at a time when Paul was in need of encouragement. He had been feeling the “hurt” and “pain” of other Christians *“turning away”* from him (v.15); Christians whom he had grown to love, trust, respect . . . Christians into whom he had poured his life. The love relationships that appeared to have been built had no meaning for Phygellus, Hermogenes and numbers of others as they deserted Paul in his time of need. They had not learned that true love is a commitment. It goes the second mile. At such a distressing time, Onesiphorus showed his love to a man of God who was incarcerated for his faith. He stood by Paul at a time when Paul needed someone to be there for him.

**\* That's love!**

Every one of us goes through experiences in life when we feel forsaken by others. When those we love, honour and respect the most, and with whom we have shared the intimacies of our heart, turn on us, or become instruments in causing great hurt and pain to us, it is a devastating thing. The tears flow, the mind races with all kinds of negative thoughts and the utterances from our mouth often increase the damage. I know what this is like. During the writing of this book, my love for some Christians has been severely tested as I have felt that I've been misunderstood and mistrusted while in very difficult circumstances. However, I am also pleased to say that the very essence of this book has contained healing therapy for me; continually reminding me of the powerful verses in God's Word that challenge me to love my fellow Christians in the same way that Jesus loves me. It hasn't been easy, but it is so blessed to have the heart and spirit released from any sense of unforgiveness or bitterness toward others. "Thank You, Jesus!"

There's no mistaking the clear message of Jesus and Paul from the Scriptures. **We must love one another as Jesus loves us.** May their hearts of love be our heart of love as we seek to build better, brighter relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ in the days ahead.

The Scriptures quoted in this Chapter must surely challenge the Christian Church in this age to re-consider what Her priorities really are. Have we allowed the church "programme" to so cloud our minds that we no longer know the power of love for one another? Have we a need to be taught the "art of loving" our fellow human beings? What is the sense of a whole lot of Bible knowledge in our heads if we are unable to communicate love from our hearts one to the other? What's the purpose of it all if we are impersonal, loveless and often "cold" in our attitudes one toward the other, often right within the confines of the same church fellowship? In many ways it seems we have "missed the plot" of what Bible Christianity is all about and, until such time as we reset our priorities as to what Christianity really is all about, we will continue to see the churches and society going in a downward spiral into hopelessness and despair. And that is a tragedy of tragedies! For the Bible does contain the keys to all of humanity's problems, all of which is culminated in these two things:

- 1. Loving God through Jesus Christ with all our heart, soul, strength and mind, and**
- 2. Loving our neighbour as we love ourselves.**

In both cases LOVE is the dominating force. Therefore, if love is not the dominating force of our life, then we have missed the plot! We have religion instead of reality, religion instead of Christianity! May the teachings of Jesus and Paul, the two greatest proponents of New Testament Christianity, powerfully affect the way we treat and respect our fellow Christians and our neighbour! Both majored on the necessity for the love of God to fill and motivate our lives! And when the love of God is doing that within us we will demonstrate it in the loving of one another. We cannot separate our love for God as being different to our love for people! That's how we measure our love for God!

**\* What is your "love gauge" reading right now?  
Full? . . . Half-full? . . . or . . . Empty?**

## Chapter 19

# LOVE RELEASES GOD-KNOWLEDGE

When the love of God in our hearts is released toward others, relationships are built in such a way that we are able to minister very powerfully into the lives of those people. There is an impartation of compassion, of caring, of love, and of knowledge. It feeds people. Back in Chapter 14 we read of the challenge of Jesus to Simon Peter about how much he really loved God: “*Do you love Me more than these?*” When Peter answered in the affirmative, Jesus told him to “*feed*” His lambs and to “*feed*” His sheep.

### **\* Love feeds.**

The love of God actively outworking from our lives also releases knowledge. In 1 John 4:7-8 we are told:

*“ . . . Everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God. He that loves not knows not God; for God is love.”*

What a powerful statement! The true knowledge of God has everything to do with the love of God.

### **\* Our ability to love determines our ability to know.**

Knowledge of God, without the corresponding love for God is useless! It is theory and not reality. It is secular rather than spiritual, and only spiritual knowledge can bring about the necessary understanding to build relationships with God and man. If there is not a personal knowledge of God in our life, on what kind of knowledge are we depending? Likewise, if there is no love of God in our heart for our neighbour, what kind of Christianity are we displaying? True knowledge is directly proportional to our ability to love.

### **\* Love knows!**

The word “know” used in the above two verses is from the Greek “ginosko” meaning “to perceive, observe, obtain a knowledge of or insight into. It denotes a personal and true relation between the person knowing and the object known, i.e. to be influenced by one’s knowledge of the object, to suffer one’s self to be determined thereby” (Bullinger’s).

It is very easy for us to quote Scriptures, to believe certain doctrines and to devote our time to further study of the Bible, but unless there is that inter-mingling of our personal life with the God of Love and the people for whom the love is to be shared, it all becomes rather impersonal. Is this a major reason why Christianity has lost so much of its punch in the Western world in the beginning of the 21st century? Have we lost the art of building relationships with our neighbour or even our fellow Christian believer? The knowledge of God comes out of relationship with God the All-knowing Knower!

**\* Do we know God?**

*“Everyone who loves is born of God and experiences a relationship with God. The person who refuses to love doesn’t know the first thing about God, because God is love ~ so you can’t know Him if you don’t love . . . My dear, dear friends, if God loved us like this, we certainly ought to love each other. No one has seen God, ever. But if we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and His love becomes complete in us ~ perfect love! This is how we know we’re living steadily and deeply in Him, and He in us: He’s given us life from His life, from His very own Spirit”* (1 John 4:7-13, The Message).

The challenge to the Christian today is to allow the reality of our beliefs and knowledge to be worked out with others. We need to realize that the secular world really doesn’t care at all what we believe. What’s more they are not too interested. To them most of us are weirdo’s (they’d be even more convinced if they really knew what we believed!). But what the world out there is crying out for today is to be loved.

**Yes, LOVED!**

The very thing Jesus challenges the Christian on ~ *“that you love one another”* ~ is the very need of the world right now! It is also their cry! They are longing to be loved, to be accepted, to be understood. Life has not been kind to them (in spite of what they say!). They’re hurting. They’ve been cheated. Their understanding of, and experiences with love has let them down. God’s answer to that cry is His love being poured out through His disciples. That’s why ordinary people like you and me need to get the message of this book deep down into our hearts and understanding. **We only love God as much as we love people!**

*“For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen”* (1 John 4:20, NIV).

**Yes, we can measure our love for God. And we need to know the measure of that love.** For it is as we face up to the challenge of this truth that we will put ourselves forward to improve the way we build our relationships. For too long we have been too superficial in our relationships. We have been too easily offended. True love knows how to rise above that. The truth of the matter is that Christians cannot afford to live that way. Too many are affected by our example. People need to know that God loves and accepts them “right where they are at.” And that includes their seeing a positive acceptance from us, His followers. They must feel His love for them, through us!

This message of the love of God at work in us is the very foundation of the Christian faith. The Apostle Paul yearned that we would know the love of God as being the very foundation of our life:

*“I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge ~ that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power*

*that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen”* (Ephesians 3:16-21, NIV).

If this portion of Scripture doesn't stir you, I really wonder what will? Here we see this amazing love of God that is so great, so powerful, that it goes beyond our knowledge and understanding!

\* **Love is greater than knowledge!**

\* **Love is what makes a Christian a Christian.**

## Chapter 20 **A TRIBUTE TO MY DAD**

As I have worked on this book, I have often thought of the “highlights” of my ministry. Right near the top of the list has to be the joy I had seeing my own Dad come to Christ in his later years, and then grow on in God. This chapter is set aside as a small “remembrance in honour of him.”

When I was young, even before marriage, and contemplating the call of God on my life, I struggled somewhat to understand the timing of His will for my life. Up until the time I was married I worked on the family farm with Dad as my employer. When I became a Christian the desire to stay farming dissipated quite quickly. My heart was toward developing an understanding of the purpose of God for my life. This obviously showed itself and several times Dad would try and get me to “put off” the call until a later stage in my life. He had been brought up to work hard, save his money and then in later life enjoy the fruits of one's labours. At that stage he did not understand the things of the Spirit of God and so he looked at it from a very natural viewpoint. In his younger days he had been brought up quite strictly in a certain church. On Sundays he had the choice of going to church three times, or staying home and working very hard on the family farm at Woodville, not so many miles away from Palmerston North (a different farm from that which I was brought up on). The result of that rigid upbringing meant that as soon as he left school and home, he went away from church. Those early influences affected him for many years. There were times when we had some upfront conversations, with my putting forward the baptism of the Holy Spirit experience as making all the difference in my life, and his defending the more religious style of thought with which he had been brought up.

While still on the farm, I went through a major testing over the issue of guidance. I had been pressured by some zealous fellow Pentecostals that I had to “***go into all the world and preach the Gospel***” (Mark 16:15); “that **now** was the time and tomorrow could be too late.” I allowed those thoughts to dictate my life and so I decided I was going to leave the farm and go out evangelizing. When I spoke to my father about leaving to do “that,” he re-acted in such a way as to let me know I was thinking very foolishly. He talked me out of it. To this day I believe God used him to stop me from making such a hasty move. I was by no means ready and my life could have taken quite a different direction to that which it finally did.

Over the years as the family prayed for Dad (by now everyone else in the family was a Christian)

we saw him slowly but surely change and mellow toward the things of God. From a point of being rather antagonistic toward my becoming a Christian minister he gradually changed to accept “the inevitable.” When he came to me and offered the use of his car if ever I needed it to go out to take meetings, or to perform other Christian ministries, we certainly knew things were changing for the better. However, he didn’t yield to Jesus fully at that point. It actually took a crisis in Jean’s family (when some members separated out of the church) that spoke very strongly to Dad. The last thing he wanted was his own family to split. (We have always been a close family). When the time came for our next church family camp, Dad decided he was going to come to camp with us! We were so excited. That was a major decision on his part! The camp speaker that year was Pastor Les Covic, who, at that time was Pastoring the Hamilton Elim Church! On the Sunday morning of that camp, Pastor Les wanted families to gather together at the front of the meeting place and there he would serve us the Holy Communion emblems. Our family were somewhat anxious as we all knew that Dad had always had a “hang-up” over the taking of Communion. The church that he was brought up in did not celebrate Communion. When the time came for families to go forward, we sat there, wondering what would happen.

Would Dad come with us?

Would we go forward without him?

What should we do?

We didn’t have to wait long to see.

Dad himself stood up, gathered all his family together and the five of us (plus some of Valerie’s children) walked to the front of the church. It was one of those beautiful moments in life. There, kneeling at the altar, Dad gave his heart to Jesus and partook of the Holy Communion bread and wine.

Our family was now complete in Jesus!

From that time on, Dad came to church and started making up for all the lost years of his walking without the Lord.

It was not too long after that when a water baptism service was arranged for several candidates. The church was growing and the kingdom of God was being increased. Dad talked to me about wanting to be water baptized!

What a joy it was for me to be able to baptize my own father. Talk about highlights in life, this had to be another of them. What a great evening that was! To stand together in the baptismal pool, then to “bury” him in the waters of baptism and see him rise up out of that water praising God. I find it hard to think of words that are applicable for such an occasion.

Then came a Sunday morning service I will never forget. It was in the Palmerston North Elim Church. My younger sister Joan was playing the piano and Jean was playing the electronic organ. I was sitting on the platform (we did that a few years back) as the service was progressing. Joan came over to where I was sitting and shared with me how she believed the Holy Spirit had just spoken to her that “there were a number of people in the meeting who had never been filled with the Holy Spirit and, if they responded by coming to the front, then everyone who came would be filled.” I thought about that for a few minutes and then stood up and shared with the church what Joan had shared with me. I gave an altar call for all those not filled with the Holy Spirit to come forward and to be filled. Then I waited for the response. It seemed like I may have made a mistake, for the place went very quiet and not a soul moved. What would have been only a few moments seemed like “hours”.



Had Joan got it wrong?  
Was I wrong to believe her?  
I wondered what was going to happen next?  
Then . . .

My Dad stood up from his seat (about halfway back in the church) and came walking down to the front. Tears filled my eyes as I saw him coming toward me. I moved toward him and we fell into each other's arms. Instantly he was speaking in tongues over my shoulder and I was pouring out tears over his. We stood there in a powerful father son embrace, while the Holy Spirit did a sovereign work of grace! It was a touch of heaven on earth!

That morning about eight people responded to the call to be filled with the Holy Spirit. And eight people were filled with the Holy Spirit!

Joan got it right!

How glad I was that I listened, stopped the meeting and made that altar call. My Dad remained very close to me, and me to him, right up to the day of his death.

Two days prior to Dad being baptized in the Holy Spirit my eldest sister Valerie had lunch with our parents and the subject of the Holy Spirit came into the conversation. Valerie was led to challenge our Dad that he needed to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. She left to spend the weekend with family and was so delighted on her return to hear of Dad's experience on the Sunday, and how that the Lord had used her as well in encouraging him to be filled with the Holy Spirit. His three children were all involved in that wonderful blessing.

In April, 1992, two weeks after Jean and I had moved from Palmerston North to Hamilton, the Lord took my Dad home to his eternal reward. It was time for him to go. Pastor Les Covic came and conducted the large funeral. It was fitting that he did, as he was so instrumental in the leading of my Dad to Jesus.

Dad's passing released my Mother and Joan to move to Hamilton to join Valerie, Jean and me. That has meant that we as a family could continue to work together serving our Lord. All I can say is "God is good!"

## Chapter 21 **A TIME TO RECAP**

**I** trust that I have been able to clearly share what is in my heart on the powerful subject of love. May the Biblical way of measuring our love for God impact us so as to penetrate deeply into our hearts.

To complete this book, let me do a recap of some of the statements that have been made . . . just to refresh your memory:

\* We do reap what we sow, i.e. if we sow love, we will reap love.  
If we sow hurt, we will reap hurt.

***"Whatever measure you use to give ~ large or small ~ will be used to measure what is given back to you"*** (Luke 6:38, TLB).

We set the standards, by what we do first!

- \* True love for God makes us address the depth of our love for people.  
Far too often we have not stopped to consider exactly what the Scriptures have to say about love and love's conditions.  
***“How can a man say that he loves God whom he has not seen, if he does not love his own brother who he has seen?”*** (1 John 4:20).
- \* Our spirituality is measured by God in terms of our relationships with our fellow Christians.  
Why do we struggle to love one another?  
Why are we afraid to love?  
Love is God's answer to fear!  
***“Perfect love casts out fear . . .”*** (1 John 4:18).
- \* When love is actively working in our life we become very positive people. Love ~ God's kind of love ~ gives us a security that nothing else can!
- \* We want to be spiritual and close to God, but we tend to ignore His Number One injunction that this happens as we allow His love to flow from our hearts to others.  
We cannot truly love God without loving our neighbour, and we cannot genuinely love our neighbour without loving God.  
**Our love for God is measured by our love for people.**
- \* People **know** if you love and accept them.  
We cannot separate love for God and love for people.  
If we struggle to love people, then we haven't fully discovered the key to Christianity.  
Love for God is demonstrated in our love for people.
- \* All the study, seeking and sacrificing in the world ~ even in the name of God ~ is useless, if we do not take the time to build love with the people.  
The test of our love is whether or not we're willing to lay down our life for others (1 John 3:14-16).
- \* How is your love for others developing?  
Love is God's way, God's standard and God's command to anyone who identifies themselves as a Bible Christian.
- \* Love is the priority! It always was and always will be!  
Everything in the kingdom of God is motivated by, and works in, love.  
Even ***“faith works by love”*** (Galatians 5:6).
- \* Love feeds!  
***“Feed My lambs . . . Feed My sheep”*** (John 21).
- \* Love releases the dynamic of God that reveals to all, that we are His disciples (John 13:34-35).  
It is the demonstration of genuine, practical love of the Christians, one for the other, that is going to impact and change the world!

- \* Love and compassion releases the Holy Spirit to work.  
Wherever I go, people love to be loved, affirmed and encouraged.
- \* **“Without love we are nothing”** (1 Corinthians 13)!  
Every Christian should be good at loving others!  
It is the Number One principle.  
It comes before all other things!  
It is the most excellent way.  
There is nothing more important or urgent.
- \* How well do you express your love?  
There is no room for cheap imitation.  
Our love must be genuine.  
Love opens hearts, opens doors and releases ministries.  
Love makes us consider the other person. It is not selfishly motivated.  
It always wants to do the best for others.
- \* Our ability to love determines our ability to know.  
Love releases knowledge.  
Love surpasses knowledge!

**Yes, we can measure our love for God. And we need to know the measure of that love. It is according to how much we love one another. I love God only as much as I love my brother and sister in Jesus Christ. That’s an awesome challenge, but then, God loves to give us awesome challenges. This one has to be the greatest.**

As we ponder on the things of God, on life itself, and His call and claims upon us, it is very helpful indeed to know that we do have a way of measuring just how much we really love God. **It is directly according to how much we sincerely and genuinely love one another!**

Since I have known this command of God, it has challenged me on many, many occasions, to re-adjust my thoughts, opinions, attitudes and actions toward others. I know that I only love God as much as I love that brother and sister who may be trying my patience, who may have a personality that I find difficult to deal with, who has criticized me for things I’ve done, or who has spread malicious rumours. These things are all challenges to my relationship with God and people. How I deal with them, and how I build the bridges with them, determines the measure of my love for God. After all, they are created in His image and, maybe . . . just maybe . . . God has put that “difficult” person into the same church fellowship as me, or has caused that person’s personality to be His means of polishing the vessel (me) that says he loves God? Maybe God is using the criticism to test the very motives of my heart so that I can become more like Jesus and carry even more of His love in my heart for others?

That’s how I measure my love for God . . . **How about you?**

My prayer and desire is that you have been helped, as well as challenged, by the contents of this

book. **May the love of God be the motivating force in all your life, your friendships and your ministry for Jesus.** That love can then reach out to all of His people and the world. There is no greater way than the way of God's love, flowing from His heart to ours and out to others.

**Yes! You can measure your love for God!  
How does yours measure up?**

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Rodney W. Francis was converted in 1959 at 17 years of age into an Independent Pentecostal Church. He is the Founder/Director of "The Gospel Faith Messenger," a literature teaching Ministry that has been developed to bring individuals to personal faith in Jesus Christ, instruct them in the foundations of the Christian faith and to equip them to repeat the process. Scores of people in many nations have and are being ministered to through "The GFM."

In 1986 he became an ordained minister with the "Elim Pentecostal Churches of New Zealand," and served on the National Executive of that Movement for over 10 years (1987-1997). He resigned from that Movement at the end of 1999 to become fully involved and focused in "The GFM" Ministry. He is credentialed with the "Elim Church Incorporated" (ECI) in Great Britain.

Rodney has a number of Timothy's in full-time ministry, both in New Zealand and overseas. His heart is to see others equipped with the love of God, the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and a passion to release the reality of Jesus into the lives of others. Today he is released to minister in the wider Body of Christ world-wide, working out from Paraparaumu, New Zealand.