

Foreword

The important truths presented in *Equipped to Love: Idolatry-free Relationships* by Norm Wakefield are foundational to healthy relationships with God and others.

We often experience frustration, anger, and disillusionment in our relationships with people. Many also find themselves disappointed with God and struggling to love Him. We know it shouldn't be this way, yet we can't seem to change. We read about a kind of love in the Bible that we truly long to experience—a love that compels us to give up all and follow after God—and wonder what is missing in our experience and why we can't seem to attain it.

Equipped to love explains the problem we have in relationships that leaves us feeling empty and frustrated. Without a solid understanding of God's overall plan and revelation to your heart of God's character, however, the concepts presented in the book may leave you feeling that God is harsh and demanding. As you read the book and complete the study guide, it should help if you keep a right perspective by understanding God's ultimate plan.

Man was created by God to walk with Him in the garden and to co-rule the world for eternity. We were created by God because of love. We are His children, and He desires nothing less than the very best for us. Throughout the Bible, we read about this plan.

Ever since the fall of man, God has been in the process of restoring man to this original position of being His children, inheriting everything with Him, being in constant fellowship with Him, and ruling with Him. As our creator, only God can know what is ultimately the best and most fulfilling for us. It is essential to believe this fundamental truth. People reject this truth for a variety of reasons—fear, doubt, lack of trust, etc.—wrongly believing that the plan they have for their lives is better than God's plan for them.

Since the fall, man has come under deception and strayed far from God. Finding our way back is both painful and challenging, but worth the price. If we will trust God as good and loving, no matter how difficult our circumstances, we will experience complete fulfillment and satisfaction in Him alone—just like Jesus was complete in His Father.

My prayer is that your faith will arise and that you will trust God completely, even when the way is dark and painful, so that you will be positioned to experience God's best in your life. Don't allow your past beliefs, experiences, or things you've been told hinder you from seeing with fresh eyes the truth in God's word. You may find that reading the plain truth in the Bible with new eyes and an open mind causes you to understand certain concepts different from what you've been taught. Don't let this frighten or confuse you. The truth about idolatry and how it hinders our relationships is commonly misunderstood.

Simply trust the word and the revelation of the Holy Spirit. Remember, God is always present to help us through trials and the shaking of false foundations if we will call on His Name and trust.

Index

Foreword 1

Overview 4

Part One—Lessons about Love

Chapter 1: Which Kind of Love?..... 6

Chapter 2: Are You Idolizing Others? 9

Part Two—The Seven Characteristics of Idolatry

Chapter 3: More Than One God..... 12

Chapter 4: Controls and Carves..... 15

Chapter 5: More on Carving..... 17

Chapter 6: Selfish..... 20

Chapter 7: Looks to the Creature..... 23

Chapter 8: Serves Many Idols 27

Chapter 9: Reproduces Itself..... 30

Chapter 10: Hate/Love..... 34

Part Three—Equipped to Love

Chapter 11: Repentance and Faith..... 37

Chapter 12: Put on Jesus Christ..... 40

Chapter 13: Love Comes from God..... 42

Chapter Review Answers..... 45

Group Discussion Answers 57

Overview

Equipped to Love: Idolatry-free Relationships by Norm Wakefield explains the fundamental problem with loving the world's way, which most of us learn before we come to a personal relationship with Christ. Once we become Christians, however, we learn that we are to love others with God's love, yet this type of love does not come naturally. In reality, there is often a significant gap between what we read about love in the Bible and what we see and experience in our lives and in the Church. *Equipped to Love* identifies the keys to learning to love with God's kind of love. The goal of this study guide is to facilitate both understanding and application of the important truths presented in *Equipped to Love*. It can be used independently or in a group format. The study guide consists of 6 parts for each chapter lesson:

- Part 1: Chapter Review
- Part 2: Getting Real
- Part 3: Faith Stretch
- Part 4: Memory Verse
- Part 5: Group Discussion
- Part 6: Life Application

For group study, participants should read the chapter and complete parts 1-4 prior to the group meeting. Answers to questions are provided at the end of the study guide to facilitate learning for individual study.

The study guide is designed with the expectation that readers will be making different levels of commitment for study. For some, completing each part for the chapters may be more than is manageable and readers should work on the Chapter Review questions to the extent they are able and complete the Getting Real exercise for each chapter. Additional parts for each chapter facilitate more in-depth learning and growth.

Part 1: Chapter Review

The Chapter Review section provides questions designed to help readers review and internalize the key concepts presented in the chapter. They are organized in a progressive manner to help readers process the truths intuitively and draw conclusions that will stay with them. A few more challenging questions are also included to facilitate further consideration of the truths and to help readers learn to rely on the Holy Spirit as their Teacher—to experience the joy of direct and personal revelation from God. Group facilitators should assist with the more difficult questions during group meetings. In addition, answers to the questions are presented at the end of the study guide.

Part 2: Getting Real

This section provides an opportunity to grow in your relationship with God by giving God permission to show you what's in your heart and what needs to change. Readers should find some time between each lesson/group meeting to get alone with God and go through the exercise. God's plan is to form us into His Image. Then, we experience the joy of His presence and partner with Him in bringing His Kingdom here on earth. That means exposing and addressing the things in our hearts that are not like Him. The process can be painful—but the outcome is extremely rewarding as we are healed and set free from the worldly things that hinder us spiritually from loving with God's love.

Part 3: Faith Stretch

These exercises are designed to challenge readers to establish new habits, activities, and patterns in their lives that will facilitate a deeper relationship with God. God created each of us as unique. What He desires in different seasons in our walk with Him will vary. Because of this, these exercises help readers assess what God is asking of them as individuals at that time.

Part 4: Memory Verse

The Bible is filled with love letters, hope, encouragement, guidance and counsel, etc.—literally everything we need to know to live victorious lives here on earth. Knowing God’s word protects us from being deceived, helps us make right decisions, helps us grow in character to be more like Him, equips us for the work of ministry, etc.

One of the primary ways God speaks to us in various life circumstances is by the Holy Spirit drawing on the reservoir of Scripture that is available because we have taken time to learn it. Therefore, in order to grow spiritually, know that we are in God’s will, avoid being deceived, enjoy fellowshiping with Him, and be used by Him, we need to know the Scriptures. The memory verse for each lesson is related to the truths presented in each chapter—so that the Holy Spirit can guide you when you face challenges involving the truths of that chapter.

Part 5: Group Discussion

The Group Discussion questions are broader conceptually and are designed to facilitate learning from one another during the group meeting. As the Body of Christ, we are all gifted in different ways and corporately bring a wealth of experience from which others can learn and grow. If you are studying in a group, avoid the temptation to not share your perspective because you might feel you are somehow less spiritual or gifted than others in the group. That “feeling” is not from God. The Bible makes it very clear how essential the contribution of each of us is in Chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians, specifically, “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’ And the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you!’ On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are *indispensable*.” (1 Cor. 12:21-22)

If you are studying independently, see the end of the study guide for answers to Group Discussion questions. (We may want to delete this sentence and the answers to discussion questions and publish a special facilitator’s version of the guide.)

Part 6: Life Application

The Life Application exercise is a suggested approach to applying the concepts learned in the chapter. If you are studying in a group, an opportunity for sharing what God is doing in your life as you apply new principles may be given.

Chapter 1: “Which Kind of Love?” _____

Part 1: Chapter Review

1. What is the primary goal of the “world’s kind of love” (page 1)?

2. When we don’t know God, there is an emptiness we try to fill in earthly or ungodly ways. According to 1 John 2:16, what are the 3 ways we try to do this? In your own words, how would you describe each of these motivations, and what would be an example?

Motivation 1: _____

Definition: _____

Example: _____

Motivation 2: _____

Definition: _____

Example: _____

Motivation 3: _____

Definition: _____

Example: _____

3. When people trapped by the world’s type of love say they love someone or something, what do they really mean (page 2)?

4. If we only have the world’s kind of love and motivations in us, what kinds of people will we love (page 4)?

5. What behaviors manifest in these worldly relationships as we try to protect them (page 4)?

Equipped to Love Study Guide

6. Putting everything together in your own words, summarize the world's type of love.

7. According to 1 Jn. 2:15, what is missing from people that makes them "love" selfishly?

8. In contrast to the world's kind of love, what is the focus of God's type of love (page 3)?

9. Reread the story about Amanda on page 3, then answer the following: as the objects of God's love, are we:

(a) Valuable and worthy of love or

(b) Useless, but in need of love?

10. Reflecting on your answer to #9 above, in what way are we of value by God's definition of love (pages 3-4)?

Part 2: Getting Real

Review the chart on page 5 contrasting the world's kind of love with God's, then do the exercise immediately following the chart, which continues through to the end of the chapter.

Part 3: Faith Stretch

Being equipped to love with God's love requires a consistent, close relationship with God. Please take a few minutes to ask God what specific steps you can take during this course to draw nearer to Him. God may ask you to spend more time in His word, where He can speak to you through the Holy Spirit. He may ask you to set aside more time with Him or call you to more time in prayer. As God speaks, agree with Him in prayer, and trust Him to enable you to do whatever He asks.

Part 4: Memory Verse

1 Jn. 2:15-16: "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world."

Part 5: Group Discussion

1. Based on what you learned in Chapter 1, why do you think so many people who go to church are no different than people who don't go to church in how they love (1 Jn. 4:7-8 or top of page 5)? How can this problem be fixed?
2. What does the author mean by the statement on page 4 that "people and situations offer opportunities for God to demonstrate the reality of our relationship to Him?"
3. The chart on page 5 lists characteristics that contrast the world's kind of love with God's.
 - (a) Describe how the behavior of love changes when its source is self-love versus God.
 - (b) If the purpose of God's kind of love is "to be used," how does that person's own need for love get met?
 - (c) Why does God's kind of love require faith?
 - (d) Why is the world's kind of love characterized by control, manipulation, and jealousy? Give some examples.
 - (e) People get tired and make mistakes, so how can it be that God's kind of love never fails?
 - (f) What aspect(s) of God's kind of love makes those flowing in it willing to endure suffering?
 - (g) What does "focused on eternal values" mean? What are some examples?
 - (h) What does unity have to do with love?
 - (i) What kinds of "facts" is God's kind of love based on? What are some examples?
 - (j) Why is the world's kind of love easily angered and offended and God's kind isn't?
 - (k) What does it mean to be "driven by emptiness"? Can the world's love fill that emptiness?
 - (l) What does "driven by fullness" mean? How do we get full? Do we ever need refilling?
4. How do you think people will respond as you begin loving them out of the fullness of God's love for you? How do you think your family, workplace, school, neighborhood, etc. will be impacted by such a change in you?
5. What is the one essential requirement to be able to love with God's love? (Hint: it requires more than just being saved! See the top of page 5.)

Part 6: Life Application

Think of a specific relationship where you have not consistently loved with God's kind of love. Ask God to fill you with His love for that person now. Do what He says this week regarding that relationship. Be prepared to share your testimony at the next meeting on how you and these relationships are beginning to change.

Chapter 2: Are You Idolizing Others? _____

Part 1: Chapter Review

1. Define the sin of idolatry (page 7).

2. Col. 3:5 identifies five manifestations of idolatry. List and define them below.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

3. What lie does a person struggling with the sin of idolatry believe (page 7)? (Hint: It has to do with what they believe about how their needs are met.)

4. What is the truth about how our needs are met (page 7)?

5. According to 1 Samuel 15:23, the sins of insubordination and rebellion are as idolatry. Given what you have learned about idolatry, why do you think this is true?

6. To varying degrees, most of us struggle with idolatry in our relationships. Try to identify idolatrous thinking and/or behavior in your relationships and record a couple of examples.

7. Under what condition(s) can true agape love take place in a relationship? Under what circumstance(s) will agape love in a relationship break down (page 8)?

8. What is the typical man-centered concept of God's goodness (page 9)?

9. What is the true God-centered definition of God's goodness?

10. Define God's sovereignty (pages 10-11).

11. What do we do that gives other people the power to make us miserable (pages 13-14)? Give an example of a time when you have experienced this "misery."

12. _____ How does unbelief lead to idolatry?

13. "You can't love someone you idolize." Why? What is our relationship toward them like?

14. What are the first two lessons about loving with God's love identified in Chapter 2 (page 15)?

Lesson 1: _____

Lesson 2: _____

Part 2: Getting Real

Since we know that God is good and God is sovereign, "Whatever (we) have at any particular moment is exactly what (we) need." Take some time to ask God to search your heart and your responses to the things He has sovereignly allowed in your life. He will bring to mind only the motivations and responses that He wants to change now.

(Note: If you are grieving over the things God is showing you, yet are confident of His forgiveness and that He is in the process of changing you, that is the Holy Spirit convicting you of sin. If, however, you have a persistent feeling of guilt that you can't shake, that may be satan falsely condemning you. Romans 8:1 says: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." You will need to take authority over the enemy's lies and attacks on your mind by confessing what you know to be true in prayer. 2 Cor. 10:5 says: "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." On the other hand, the Lord may be directing you to a deeper repentance than you were expecting. Sometimes persisting conviction is a sign that the Holy Spirit wants you to take responsibility for the practice of a sin from when you were a child. In such cases, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you events in your childhood and teen years when you practiced that particular sin so that you may find places of repentance.)

Confess the things that God is showing you He wants to change and let Him heal and cleanse you as you determine to trust Him with these circumstances and relationships.

Part 3: Faith Stretch

According to Norm Wakefield in *Equipped to Love*, “Your relationship with Jesus is foundational to your being equipped to love.” Before the next group meeting (or before starting the next chapter), ask God to help you identify the level of relationship you have with Him, and ask Him what step(s) He would like you to take to partner with Him in beginning to move to the next level. Trust that He will give you the grace to begin implementing what He shows you. In *Communion with God* by Mark and Patti Virkler, the five stages of becoming a “friend of God” (i.e., not doing something, but being with Someone) are as follows:

1. Stage 1: Casual—I speak of the world outside me (sports, weather).
2. Stage 2: Beginning Trust—I speak of what I think and feel.
3. Stage 3: Deep Trust—I share my dreams, mistakes, and frustrations.
4. Stage 4: Intimacy—I sit quietly with my Friend, experiencing a Presence beyond words.
5. Stage 5: Union—I become one with that Person, speaking, feeling, and acting with His reactions.

Part 4: Memory Verse

Col. 3:5: “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust (passion), evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.”

Part 5: Group Discussion

1. If idolatry is the world’s answer to dealing with our emptiness, what is God’s answer?
2. The first two paragraphs at the top of page 8 explain how we can believe we are being loving when, in reality, we are being selfish. Explain, in your own words, what you think this means. Give an example of selfish behavior that appears, on the surface, to be loving.
3. What is our position with God as part of His creation, and what is the purpose of our existence (page 10)? How have these truths changed your perspective on your relationship with God?
4. If God is good and God is sovereign, then we can say that “Whatever (we) have at any particular moment is exactly what (we) need.” If we truly believe this, how will our reactions to our circumstances and to relationships change? What circumstance or relationship can you look at with a new God perspective now, and how will your response(s) change?
5. What does the author mean by “When it comes to loving, people’s actions or responses to others’ actions reveal their true doctrinal foundation and motivations” (page 11)? Give some examples of responses that would result from (a) right beliefs and (b) wrong beliefs.
6. “Your relationship with Jesus is foundational to your being equipped to love.” Why is this a true statement? What are some ways we can begin to strengthen our relationship with Jesus?

Part 6: Life Application

Begin a habit of “continually pray(ing) for grace to receive all things and all people as expressions of God’s love for you because God purposely brings them to you to provide opportunities for you to reject the spirit of idolatry and turn to Him for the power to love.”

Chapter 3: More Than One God _____

Part 1: Chapter Review

1. Eating from the tree of knowledge “killed” Adam spiritually. Why did gaining knowledge have this effect? How is it the same for us when we choose knowledge over God (page 20)?

2. Why is seeking knowledge idolatrous? If seeking knowledge is idolatrous, what are the distinguishing characteristics of this study that show it is not idolatrous?

3. What does “The spirit of idolatry is a deluding influence” mean (page 20)?

4. What happens to people spiritually and emotionally when they are deluded?

5. What characteristic of man makes the problems of being deluded by the spirit of idolatry worse (page 41)? What does the Bible say about this? What can we do to correct the problem?

6. “The inborn spirit of idolatry skews our thinking regarding our purpose in life and God’s purpose in creation.” What problem does this cause (page 21)?

7. According to Rom. 8:26, we have a “weakness.” What is it? How does God help us (page 22)?

Part 2: Getting Real

Ask God to show you how you may be feeding on the Tree of Knowledge and neglecting the Tree of Life. For example, going to a psychologist for marital help, reading books on raising children, or studying business management techniques to improve your performance. None of these are inherently wrong, but they easily become substitutes for going first to God who supplies all we need to see how He will provide.

If God shows you an area where you are going to the world instead of Him, confess your idolatry and trust He will show you His provision. God will often work through natural means, but we need to stay focused on God as the one supplying our needs and let Him direct us.

Part 3: Faith Stretch

To combat the lies of the spirit of idolatry, especially when you are in need, start confessing:

- God is the Source of supply for all I need, and I look to Him alone.
- What God supplies is exactly what I need to fulfill His purposes and glorify Him.

This practice will keep you focused on God, trusting God, and staying in tune with His purposes and not our selfish desires.

Part 4: Memory Verse

Phil. 4:19: “And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”

Part 5: Group Discussion

1. Why are we so vulnerable to the suggestion of the spirit of idolatry that more than one god exists? What are some of the ways this spirit tries to deceive us or plant false thoughts? What actions can we take to protect ourselves (i.e., to guard our hearts) against these deceptions?
2. How can you know whether you are eating from the Tree of Knowledge or the Tree of Life? How does the spirit of idolatry trick us regarding knowledge? What are some examples of eating from the Tree of Knowledge and from the Tree of Life?
3. Agape love flows out of our relationship with God. Jesus’ last words to his disciples outlined the essentials of developing that relationship. What are the 6 points (page 23)? Explain why these points are important to developing our love relationship with God.
4. To combat the lies of the spirit of idolatry, what 3 points should we keep in mind (page 24)? How does each principle help us avoid being influenced by the spirit of idolatry?
5. People often say, “God has something better.” What do they mean? What is the truth?

Part 6: Life Application

One of the most important aspects of applying the concepts from Chapter 3 is tearing down wrong beliefs and establishing a new belief system that is in alignment with the truth.

Equipped to Love Study Guide

This week's application will be to practice developing a thankful heart, knowing that God really does supply all of our needs. This exercise ties together this week's Faith Stretch of confessing truth with the week's memory verse. You can start developing a thankful heart by meditating on Ps. 100:4-5:

“Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.”

Chapter 4: Controls and Carves _____

Part 1: Chapter Review

1. What does the author mean by “idols need to be ‘made’ by the idolater because the object of their worship isn’t God”?

2. What does it mean to worship an idol (page 26)?

3. People under the influence of the spirit of idolatry look to other people to supply _____ desires and comforts (page 26).

4. Considering your answer to #3 above, why does being under the influence of the spirit of idolatry lead to manipulative and controlling behavior toward the person(s) being idolized?

5. What are carving tools (page 26)?

6. Define positive carving tools. Give an example. Why are they deceptive?

Define: _____

Example: _____

Deceptive to the “carvee” because: _____

Deceptive to the “carver” because: _____

7. Define negative carving tools (page 28). List 6 of them (page 29).

1: _____ 2: _____ 3: _____

4: _____ 5: _____ 6: _____

8. What is the root of anger in many relationships (page 29)? What can we do about it (page 30)?

9. What behavior will you notice if the spirit of idolatry is at work in your motives (page 32)?

Part 2: Getting Real

Ask God to help you identify the carving tools you use on people. What are your positive tools? What are your negative tools? Make a decision to lay them down and let go of your “right” to have things your way. Tell God that you really believe that Jesus is in control and that the circumstances in your life are allowed by Him and are exactly what you need. Trust God to continue to supply everything you need (not what you selfishly want) and for the grace to love others in difficult situations.

Part 3: Faith Stretch

Begin a habit of meditating on Scripture. Col. 3:2 says we are to set our minds on things above (heavenly things). One way to do so is to meditate on Scripture. According to *Webster’s Dictionary*, meditate means to “reflect on, ponder, or contemplate (consider thoughtfully).” When we meditate on Scripture, it involves calling on God for revelation. A good verse to use to begin meditating would be the Memory Verse below.

Part 4: Memory Verse

Is. 55:1: “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.”

Part 5: Group Discussion

1. What does it mean to worship God (Hint: Keep in mind our humble position, page 30)?
2. What is an idol? Idolatry? An idolater? How do we become idolaters? How does an idolater make an idol? Give an example.
3. Now, considering the answers to the first two questions, explain the following: What does idolatry have to do with worship? Why does idolatry grieve God so deeply? Why does idolatry keep us from experiencing the abundant life God promises?
4. Having read this chapter, do you recognize carving tools you use? What are some of them? How would you go about laying them down?
5. Whether we feel frustrated or free is a measure of the degree to which we are walking in God’s grace or carving. Why would that be so? What can we do if we still feel frustrated?

Part 6: Life Application

Reread the author’s story on meeting his future wife, Alma (page 26 to just above the “Negative Carving Tools” subhead on page 28). Think about your relationships and ask God to show you where you too may be misinterpreting the positive carving of idolatry as love. Confess to God the times you have carved on others and receive His forgiveness. Ask God to bless those on whom you’ve carved and to heal those relationships. Ask God to fill you with His love so that you can begin to love others from an overflow of what you have received from Him.

Chapter 5: More on Carving _____

Part 1: Chapter Review

1. What aspect of our human nature was the evangelist appealing to in order to get people in the audience to respond to his message (page 33)?

2. What is the problem with this type of appeal?

3. Why does the evangelist's appeal risk getting people to approach God in a spirit of idolatry (page 33)?

4. In addition to understanding what God has done for us and why we need "a Savior," what must be happening in someone's heart for salvation to occur (page 37)?

5. The paragraph at the top of page 37 outlines some of the things we experience at salvation. Please explain them in your own words.

6. In the paragraph at the top of page 34, the author describes how we can be manipulative in our relationship with God and states that our love for God can suffer because of this. Explain this concept.

7. What attitudes will surface to help us recognize when someone has been seeking God to "get (for his own selfish ends)" (page 37)?

8. What carving tools might the type of person described in #7 above use on God (page 37)? If you know someone like this, what kinds of things do they say?

Part 2: Getting Real

Take some time to examine your relationship with God. First, ask God to reveal any tendencies toward approaching Him in a spirit of idolatry. Specifically ask Him if there is:

- Anger, bitterness, or resentment toward Him.
- Feelings of disappointment/disillusionment or confusion in your relationship with Him.
- Feelings like God is unfair, doesn't love you as much as He loves others (jealousy), has given others more talents or material blessings (envy), etc.

If feelings such as these surface, don't repress them and be deceived into thinking that a Christian couldn't possibly have these feelings toward God. We sometimes can and do have these feelings. Remember, our hearts are deceptive, and we need to ask God to show us what's there so we can be cleansed.

If we don't take this step, we will remain hindered in our relationship with God. We need to confess these wrong attitudes toward God and repent. When you have negative feelings toward God, you are misunderstanding some aspect(s) of His character. God already knows you are feeling this way. He's waiting for you to talk to Him about them and let Him cleanse and heal you. He will heal you by showing you the truth about His love for you. You can know for certain that the problem isn't a lack of God's love for you.

Part 3: Faith Stretch

Now that you understand it is possible to be manipulative with God, it is important to make sure you are not praying manipulative or controlling prayers. This is especially important when you are praying with others and agreeing to something that may not be God's will.

You may need to begin changing the way you approach God in prayer. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, He first acknowledged the Father and asked for the Father's will to be done.

In the Garden, Jesus yielded his personal will to His Father's. Under the extreme circumstances of the Garden, knowing the Cross was before him, Jesus struggled in yielding his will because He knew the pain He was about to experience. When we pray about things that will have an effect on us personally, we will struggle too.

If we pray wanting a certain outcome, we will not be able to hear what God is saying. We must first lay down our will in the matter like Jesus did, then pray. If you learn to pray without a will for yourself in the matter except for the glory of God, you will know the will of the Father and

experience the pleasure of a close relationship with God. When you have a heart that is free of self-serving motives, self-will, and sin, your prayers will accomplish much.

“The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” (James 5:16)

Part 4: Memory Verse

Rom. 12:1-2: “Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Part 5: Group Discussion

1. If you are comfortable sharing, what attitudes did you find surfacing during the “Getting Real” exercise? In what ways was God speaking to you to help you understand truth and know Him better? How is your relationship with God now changing after going through this experience?
2. If you are comfortable sharing, how is your approach to prayer changing after doing the “Faith Stretch” exercise? What does it mean to have a “will” regarding something you are praying about? How do you know if you have a will in a matter for which you are praying? Why is having a will about something you’re praying about a problem? Why are your prayers more effective when you don’t have a will in a matter?
3. What seven things do we need to be careful about in our love relationship with God (page 38)? How will practicing them strengthen our relationship with God?
4. We all know people who are disillusioned and disappointed in their relationship with God. Some have turned from God. Equipped with understanding from Chapter 5, how would you minister to someone who is struggling to love God without idolatrous expectations?

Part 6: Life Application

Ask God to reveal to you anyone in your circle of influence who has been suffering under the spirit of idolatry in his or her relationship with God. If He shows you someone, pray for the person. Be open to God’s leading; He may ask you to minister truth to them. Be aware that people wounded in this way will respond best to your simply letting God’s love flow through you to them.

Sharing how God’s love is changing you and modeling that love in your life will be much more effective than preaching to them about their problem with idolatry!

Chapter 6: Selfish

Part 1: Chapter Review

1. What is the main purpose for having an idol (page 39)?

2. Why does a person under the influence of the spirit of idolatry reject God’s ways and timing (page 39)?

3. Why does an idolater make an idol (page 40)?

4. What is at the heart of most misery, depression, anger, and frustration? Why is this the case?

5. The Bible says “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mk. 12:31). So what is wrong with self-love?

6. We are often deceived into thinking we do good things—that even unsaved people sometimes “do good.” What is the truth about what is good by God’s standards (page 41)?

7. Page 41 lists several “self sins.” List some of them—include some of your own. What do these self-sins cause us to do? Why?

8. What do our natural desires reflect (page 41)? What is the problem with this?

9. How do our natural desires distort our thinking (Mat. 16:21-25)?

10. What does Jesus say is the solution to this problem of distorted thinking (Mat. 16:21-25)?

11. Realizing that our self-interest is closely linked to satan, what else can we do (page 42)?

12. What characterizes Jesus' love (page 42)?

13. How was Jesus able to find fulfillment (remember, He was both human and God) (page 43)?

Part 2: Getting Real

Read James 3:13-14. Ask God to show you where you may be struggling with some of these “earthly” ambitions and motives. Confess these and lay them down. Then read James 3:17-18, which contrasts earthly “wisdom” with God’s. Let God begin to talk to you about how His wisdom is different by meditating on this passage.

Is there a situation in your life where you are experiencing envy, feel strongly about how the outcome will affect you, and feel fear and the need to control the situation? It may be you are operating out of your own selfishness and not trusting God with the outcome. Bring any situation like this before the Lord now and ask Him what He wants you to do about it. When you start having thoughts that put others first and bring peace to your heart and to the situation, that is God speaking. Thank Him for His wisdom and do what He says.

Part 3: Faith Stretch

In several places in the epistles, Paul tells the readers of his letters to “put off,” “put to death,” or “get rid of” the things of the flesh or self. God won’t do this for us. We need to choose to “deny self” and follow after Jesus. We often don’t realize we’re focused on self because the spirit of idolatry is deceptive, making us think that what we want is “good and worthy” when it is selfish.

Start asking God to show you areas in your life where you are focused on yourself (remember the “self-sins”? -- respect, comfort, gratification, etc.). It could be that you have selfish ambitions at work. Or perhaps you have situations in your marriage or with your family where you are looking to others to satisfy a “self” sin. Rebuke the self-interest, deny yourself in the matter, and follow after God, trusting He will meet your needs (not your selfish desires). You will begin finding your fulfillment in God as you continue “putting off” your old self.

Part 4: Memory Verse

Col. 2:10: “And you have been given fullness in Christ (made complete), who is the head over every power and authority.”

Part 5: Group Discussion

1. On page 40 the author states, “The spirit of idolatry deceives us into thinking our desires are worthy of fulfillment. It leads us to believe we deserve to be loved, comforted, respected, obeyed, appreciated, and treated fairly.” What is wrong with this belief? What desires should we have? How can we get our hearts rightly aligned with God in this area?
2. The spirit of idolatry will try to make us feel like we are incomplete. Give some examples. What can we do to counteract this lie (pages 43-44)? Have you experienced victory in this area by applying these principles? Explain.
3. How can we truly lay down our selfishness without constantly regretting that decision and wanting those desires met? In what ways do you find the concept of laying down selfishness challenging? Do you find your heart is still arguing with this idea?
4. How do we lay down our selfish ambition, yet find purpose and motivation in life?
5. Why might self-respect be considered idolatrous? How about self-sufficiency? Aren't these usually considered healthy, mature things by most people's standards? Whose standards should we apply?

Part 6: Life Application

As you practice this week's Faith Stretch, relationships should start to change as you let God show you how you've been focusing on self and begin to be filled with God's love to be truly loving to others.

Chapter 7: Looks to the Creature _____

Part 1: Chapter Review

1. What does “Those who make them will be like them” mean? (Ps. 115:8)

2. What is the fundamental problem with looking to “our own creations”—that is, things we have created (idols we made) in our minds and to people and things in general for happiness and comfort (page 46)?

3. Why does idolatry bring the “wrath of God” (Col. 3:5-6)?

4. Of all the people we “carve” on, who do we likely carve on the most (page 47)? Give some examples of how you have been carving on this person.

5. When we have made ourselves an idol, what is our relationship with God like (page 47)?

6. What does it mean to “chisel and carve on ourselves to supply according to the expectations of others, God, and ourselves” (page 47)? What is at the heart of this behavior problem?

7. When we have a performance mindset, we are really looking to ourselves _____ (page 47).

8. The Bible tells about a creature that thought he could be like God. Who was that creature?

9. When we perform out of idolatry of self, what are we stealing from God?

10. When we perform and eat from the tree of knowledge—really, trying to be like God—what are we really trying to do (page 48)?

11. What is deceptive about this way of thinking—performing and having knowledge (page 48)?

12. It's not wrong to work hard, do good deeds, and have knowledge. So how can you know whether your behavior is idolatrous or godly (page 48)?

13. How is it possible to choose good things for the wrong motives (pages 48-49)?

14. Since we know that our own love is idolatrous and true love comes from God, what do we need to do to be able to love (pages 49-50)?

Part 2: Getting Real

After reading Chapter 7, in what ways can you see that you may be carving on yourself? Review the description on page 47 for a reminder of what it means to carve on yourself. In short, this means we are trying to make ourselves righteous by performing for God, seeking His approval and the approval of those we love. The Bible says our (self) righteousness is “as filthy rags,” and there is no righteousness apart from what Jesus has done for us. We commit the sin of idolatry of self when we wrongly believe we can make ourselves righteous and worthy of God’s approval.

During your quiet time this week, ask God to show you how you may have been performing to earn God’s approval, trying to make yourself worthy. Agree with God on what He shows you about your sin of idolatry of self (confess the sin). Make a decision to stop looking to yourself for righteousness (repent) and to only look to Jesus as the one who can cleanse you of sin and make you righteous. Believe that God will actually change you over time to be more and more like Jesus (righteous in motive and behavior, not just because of your position in Christ) through relationship with Him, *not* by trying hard to be good (self-righteousness). This will happen as you grow closer to God and His love is released in you, which will change the motives of your heart. When your heart is changed (made righteous), what you say and do will naturally be right-

eous because of a changed heart—not because you are working hard at being good. “... For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks” (Mat. 12:34). This is not to say that right behavior and decisions will never be difficult, but your motives will have changed, and you will have the strength of a close relationship with God, a changed heart, and His grace to overcome.

Part 3: Faith Stretch

Those of us who tend to perform for approval are often weary, frustrated, and disappointed. We try to “be good” and handle everything ourselves. If this sounds familiar, know that God wants to give you rest from your self-imposed burdens. The Bible says that God’s requirements and standards are not overwhelming, unlike the expectations we often place on ourselves. “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Mat. 11:28-30)

We all need retraining to learn God’s ways of handling life. When we go to God with our burdens, He shows us what’s important, what our role is, the timing on acting—everything we need to know, when we need to know. The key is to go to God instead of ourselves for solutions (feeding from the Tree of Life versus the Tree of Knowledge). The next time you start feeling pressure, weariness, or the need to “fix” a problem, take it to God first and ask Him for wisdom and direction. Make this a habit, practicing taking time out to get God’s help throughout the day.

Part 4: Memory Verse

Mat. 11:28: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Part 5: Group Discussion

1. What are some examples of people performing for God? What characterizes a Christian who performs for God versus one whose lifestyle and ministry flows out of relationship with God? What is the root wrong belief that perpetuates this approach to serving God?
2. Why do people try to perform for God? What is it that these “striving” Christians don’t understand about our relationship with God? In what way are they like the Pharisees?
3. What does performing for God have to do with idolatry? How can Christians be freed from the performance approach to seeking God’s approval?
4. How would you minister to a Christian caught up in performing for God?
5. Study the chart on page 5. In what ways do the wrong beliefs align with the behavior of performance-driven Christians?

Part 6: Life Application

Begin practicing the author’s suggestion on page 50: “The next time you find yourself upset with someone because they didn’t do what you wanted when you wanted them to, cry out to God for filling and direction in how to love.” Let these experiences draw you into God’s presence for grace to love.

Where do I look for my needs?

God ← ☺ ☹ → Idol

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God is love: He gave His Son for me while I was a sinner. • God is good: He is forming me into His Image and meeting the 7 longings of my soul as I grow close to Him. • I humbly look to God for everything; everything I need, God supplies. His plan for my life is better than my plan. • God is sovereign: every circumstance is allowed by Him. 	<p>What I believe about how my needs are met</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If I am “good,” God will love me and answer my prayers. • God is good means that God wants to quickly make me happy and successful. • God doesn’t supply all of my happiness, so I look to people to make me happy. • God is not in control of everything, so I need to control my circumstances.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To God for all of my supply according to His will and purposes. 	<p>Where I go to get my needs met</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To self to get my selfish desires and comforts met (lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride of life).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22). 	<p>How my life is characterized (the fruit)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immorality, impurity, idolatry, witchcraft (manipulation and control), hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like (Gal. 5:19-21).

What I believe determines my behavior

Chapter 8: Serves Many Idols _____

Part 1: Chapter Review

1. The opening paragraph of Chapter 8 (page 51) describes some of the characteristics of the spirit of idolatry. It is important to understand these aspects to know why people under this spirit's influence have many idols. List a couple of these characteristics below.

2. "By its nature, the spirit of idolatry has lusts unfulfilled." When carving isn't accomplishing the desired effect, what does an idolater do (page 51)?

3. Considering your answer to #2 above, what happens over time (i.e., what kind of baggage accumulates) (page 51)? Describe how/why this happens to most of us (page 52).

4. What wrong belief do people hold when under the influence of the spirit of idolatry?

5. What does this wrong belief reject?

6. What does the author suggest is the root problem for divorce (page 53)?

7. What does "The idol trail lying in our past cries out for justice" mean (page 54)?

8. What is the root cause of people having many broken and miserable relationships (page 54)?

9. The author states Jesus understood that "the essence of worship and service to His Father" was "looking to His Father to supply His needs (page 55)." Explain what this means.

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10. If, instead of worshipping and serving God, we are looking to others to supply our needs, what relational position have we put them and ourselves in, and what problem patterns result from this (pages 55-56)?

11. Instead of recognizing the spirit of idolatry at work, when we experience these painful relationship patterns, how do we typically respond (that is, how do we: (1) feel about ourselves, (2) rationalize the circumstances, and (3) try to stop the pattern from repeating) (page 56)?

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

12. What can be done to break this pattern of idolatrous relationships (page 56)?

13. What can be done to heal current relationships suffering from idolatrous behavior (page 58)?

Part 2: Getting Real

Turn to page 58 and go through the exercise described in the last two paragraphs.

Part 3: Faith Stretch

Idolatry-free relationships are challenging because most of us have invested much effort into learning to make life work through carving and selfishness to get our selfish desires met. Yet God’s standard for relationships is love as the motive (giving and serving) for our actions. This is possible only as we look to God as our sole source of supply and lay down our selfish desires.

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray in the “Lord’s Prayer” (Mat. 6:9-13), He included: worship (“hallowed be your name”), service and laying down our selfish desires (“your will be done”), and looking to God as our sole supplier (“Give us today our daily bread”). Many of us are familiar with the Lord’s Prayer and use it in some form in their daily time with God.

If you use the Lord's Prayer regularly, it may help you to stay rightly focused on God by adding a few words of your own as you pray the prayer. For example:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. (I worship and serve you alone. I know that only you can supply what I need. No person, no matter how much I love them, can meet my needs or take your place.)

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (I lay down my plans and selfish desires and will listen and obey you. I recognize that your ways are not at all like my selfish human ways and that your plans are best. I know that as I choose to follow you daily, I will experience your love and acceptance. I will no longer worry about what people think of me.)

Give us today our daily bread. (I look to you to supply all my needs—body, soul, and spirit—from providing wisdom at work to discernment in relationships to strengthening in my physical body. I know that you meet the seven longings of my soul as I spend time in your presence.)

Part 4: Memory Verse

1 Jn. 3:16: “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.”

Part 5: Group Discussion

1. The author describes a “general idol trail” (page 51 through 54) we all tend to follow. Why do we move from “mom” as an idol to self? What attitudes and behaviors are apparent when self is an idol?
2. When we turn to friends, relationships, and ultimately spouses, what problems in addition to idolatry are involved? Finally, in what ways can our attitudes toward God be idolatrous, to what can that lead?
3. Idolatrous marriages often become miserable (when carving no longer achieves the desired response). What do women commonly begin to idolize? Describe the behavior. Why is it idolatrous? What do men often turn to? Describe the behavior and why it's idolatrous.
4. When we realize idolatry of others is behind our miserable relationships, what actions can we take to address the problem? How will we change in the process? How will our relationships then change as a result?

Part 6: Life Application

The “Getting Real” exercise for this chapter will be painful for many, but very freeing. God forgives us completely and removes the weight of guilt we were carrying. God will heal the people for whom you prayed; however, sometimes God will have you ask for their forgiveness in person. Be sure you are being prompted by God to do so. For example, it may be appropriate to talk to a sibling or parent but may not be appropriate to talk to someone from a past relationship.

Chapter 9: Reproduces Itself _____

Part 1: Chapter Review

1. We often think of punishment when we think of God’s judgment. What is the “other side” to God’s judgment (page 59)?

2. How does God judge our sin? What is God’s purpose in judging sin?

3. Look at Rom. 1:22-32 on page 60. Why did God have to give them over to sin?

4. What happened to the people when God gave them over to their sin in Rom. 1:22-32?

5. Explain the “law of the harvest (page 61).” What does it have to do with idolatry?

6. How does the sin of idolatry reproduce itself (page 61)?

7. Idolatrous parents “Teach their children how to be nice to others if they want to be treated nicely.” Why is this an idolatrous approach? How would you correct it?

8. Why does God allow “difficulties in relationships and circumstances” (page 62)?

9. There are times when God withholds his grace to love (page 62). Why does God do this? How should we respond?

10. We often equate discipline with punishment. When we speak of God’s discipline, what is really meant (page 62)?

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11. When God disciplines us, how are we being treated (page 62)?

12. “Idolatry can only take place in an atmosphere of unbelief in God. (page 62)” Why is this a true statement?

13. When we are struggling with unbelief, what do we need from God (page 62)?

14. What does allowing God to train us result in (page 63)?

15. How does God commonly discipline us (Chapter 9)? What does He often use to train us (page 63)?

16. What do we often think is the problem (page 63)? What is the real problem?

17. What should we do regarding the painful relationships ordained by God (page 67)?

18. Often, our problem with idolatry begins with a distorted image of God. What is a common wrong perception that people have regarding God (page 65)?

Part 2: Getting Real

Gal. 6:7 says, “A man reaps what he sows.” This “law of the harvest” means that we will experience in greater measure the harm we have caused others with our idolatrous behavior. We can reverse some of these effects by repenting and becoming vessels of healing in those places where we have brought harm.

Ask God to show you whether there is a current relationship where you can begin to sow the good seed of God’s love. As His love flows through you by His grace, the effects of idolatry can be reversed to reap, instead, a harvest of righteousness. As you ponder the idolatrous patterns and expectations established in this relationship, believe that God will give you discernment and wisdom to begin to change your idolatrous behavior and turn the relationship around.

You may realize you have pain and anger wrapped up in this relationship for which you need to repent and be healed. There may also be some unmet needs and unresolved issues involving this person, born out of looking to them instead of to God for your needs. Lay the hurt, anger, and

idolatrous expectations down at Jesus' feet and trust Him to heal your pain and give you grace to love. Remember that it is our unbelief in God's provision that causes us to expect others to supply needs only God can supply. It may take time to learn to trust God and lay down old behavior patterns.

Part 3: Faith Stretch

According to the author, "When God sends someone into our lives who has the mission and capacity to draw that spirit of idolatry out in the open, it is not a joyful time." However, if we will submit to God's discipline (training), we will grow, and the sooner we submit, the faster we grow.

"We often fail to realize that God has an unwavering goal to sanctify us and purify us from our unbelief and idolatry." Instead, we tend to focus on the other person's problem and how it is causing us discomfort or pain instead of on what God is trying to change in us through the circumstance. Many Christians have wrong perceptions of God (that He would never allow painful circumstances), so they don't recognize God's training tools. God will keep giving the same lesson until we learn them. To stop experiencing the same types of painful situations, learn to recognize God's training tools and get in alignment with them for growth:

When you experience pain, disappointment, and anger—anything that's not comfortable and pleasant (unless it's a result of sin)—realize God is training you. Usually, God is trying to get at something in your heart that needs to change. Knowing this, you can learn to work with God by asking Him what He's exposing whenever you experience these feelings. Let God show you, then obey what He tells you—whether to repent, ask forgiveness, change some behavior, etc.

Also realize that the spirit of idolatry will try to get you to focus on yourself or the other person or circumstance that is causing you to feel uncomfortable. If we want our faith to grow, we must stay focused on Jesus (Heb. 12:2). This is the point at which what you believe will determine your response. If you truly believe that what you have is exactly what you need, you will stay focused on God as your sole provider and submit to His dealings. If not, you will remain idolatrous by avoiding pain, carving on the person, or finding a new idol.

Not only does what you believe matter, but also what you choose. Sometimes God is exposing selfishness, not just idolatry (looking to others for our needs). God will not supply selfish desires. If your discomfort is a result of carving for selfish gain that is no longer working, you need to lay these desires down to grow. Will you serve God or mammon (yourself)?

Practicing these steps will get you faster to the place where God wants you to go, and you will stop feeling like you keep "going around the mountain."

Part 4: Memory Verse

1 Cor. 8:6-7: "Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live."

Part 5: Group Discussion

1. What does “giving us over to our sin” mean (pages 59-60)? Give an example of when this has happened to you involving the sin of idolatry. How did you respond?
2. When God allows a painful relationship to train us, what things do we tend to do that slow our growth (page 63)? How can we recognize when God is training us?
3. In the imaginary scenario of the couple driving through the valley (page 65): (a) What are the key idolatrous perceptions as described in the second interpretation of the incident (pages 65-66) and (b) what are the key statements in the third interpretation of the incident that indicate a right understanding of our position with God?
4. Why will people with the second interpretation eventually struggle with bitterness toward God?

Part 6: Life Application

By practicing the steps in this chapter’s Faith Stretch, you should start to see changes in your relationships as you stop blaming the other person for not making you happy and start asking God how idolatry may have set in. God will direct you in identifying the idolatry and give you grace to love with His love.

Chapter 10: Hate/Love _____

Part 1: Chapter Review

1. Do people who seek God only for self-protection, comfort, or temporal blessings love God (page 69)? Explain your answer.

2. Give examples of what true lovers of God might say that distinguishes them from idolaters (page 69)?

3. What is at the heart of a love/hate relationship (page 69)?

4. What makes a relationship flip from the extreme of hate to love and back again?

5. Is it possible to love someone with God's love when at the same time we want something from that person (page 69)? Why or why not?

6. What is the "distorted purpose of God" commonly presented in churches today (page 70)?

7. What does the Bible say about our natural motives before we know God (page 70)?

8. Because of how we're born, what is the need we feel for God (page 70)?

9. When the Holy Spirit begins to teach and change us, what is the real need for God that we begin to recognize (page 70)?

10. What does an idolater want God to be like (page 71)?

11. What requirement from God would an idolater never imagine or want to be true (page 71)?

12. See your answer to #11 above. Why is this requirement of God a problem for an idolater?

13. What is the source of hatred of other people (page 73)? Why?

14. What is at the heart of our complaints about other people (page 73)?

15. At what point is it possible for us to truly love God (page 73)

16. At what point is it possible to love the difficult people in our lives (page 73)?

Part 2: Getting Real

Reread the section on “Hatred for God,” beginning on page 70. God’s ways are so different from our ways of thinking. It is easy to see why we are naturally lovers of ourselves and hate God. We don’t understand His ways and purposes. Until God starts to change us, we seek God with our idolatrous motives (to get) and tend to develop a love/hate relationship with Him. According to the author, this type of relationship is characterized by “bondage to the law, pride of man, intolerance, aggressiveness, deceit, hypocrisy, all the deeds of the flesh, confusion, despair, devastation or defection, and *no peace*.”

We’re all somewhere on the continuum of moving from hating God to loving Him. Consider this description of the love/hate relationship with God and ask Him where you stand. If you identify with one or two of the descriptive words or are feeling troubled by them, pause and ask God what He is trying to show you. His heart is to free you to experience more of His love for you and for you to love Him more. As the chapter points out, healing begins with first exposing sin and selfishness. Realize that if we never let God show us what’s in our hearts, it stays there, hidden like a cancer causing pain (no peace) that continues to grow and eventually kills us. So go ahead and let God show you what needs to change. Then He can heal you and free you to love.

Part 3: Faith Stretch

The author states that “We can only love God when He reveals Himself to us.” God reveals Himself in many ways, one way being through the written word, the Bible, as God brings it to life to you as *rhema* (God’s spoken word to you). You might want to begin studying some of the key

passages on knowing God, including all of 1 John and John 14-15, which describe love and how to draw life from God. Also, Hebrews teaches about Jesus' all-sufficiency, superiority, and empathy. God will reveal Himself to you as you are faithful to pursue Him.

Part 4: Memory Verse

1 Jn. 4:19-20: "We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen."

Part 5: Group Discussion

1. The author states, "It may perhaps be argued that the false gospel that has grown to prevail in the church over the past 175 years has been the greatest stimulus in the hearts of people to hate God (page 70)." What is this "false gospel"? Why do you think this false gospel has emerged (what is the root cause or problem)? What Scripture passages can you think of that directly contrast this view or "false gospel"? What do you think can be done to address this problem in the Church today?
2. For the following statements, describe what an idolater would think, then explain the truth:
 - (a) God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.
 - (b) Come to Jesus, and He'll give you the greatest high of your life.
 - (c) If you'll believe in Jesus, He promises to make you healthy, wealthy, and successful.
 - (d) God has a place in His heart which only you can fill.
3. What things does God use to accomplish His purposes in the lives of His children (page 71)?
4. What does God use to bear Himself a testimony (page 71)?
5. How does God accomplish healing (page 71)?
6. Ponder your answers to #3-5 above. Now consider some truths you know about God—He's good; He's love; He is all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present; He doesn't want anyone to perish in hell, etc. Yet we see pain, suffering, innocent children killed, etc. What is the key to understanding this apparent disconnect between what we read in the Bible about God and what we experience (page 72)? (Hint: it has to do with the way man naturally thinks.)

Part 6: Life Application

Some relationships may have come to mind as you read this chapter. If so, did they fit some of the characteristics of love/hate described by the author? Remember, the spirit of idolatry produces these types of relationships, and we are all born idolaters. As God reveals Himself to us, we begin to be equipped to love both God and others. When you recognize feelings of hate, you can draw on God to grow toward love in your relationship with God and others. Here is how the author describes addressing idolatry involving love/hate on page 74: "Whenever I feel a twinge of hatred for anything or anyone in my life whom I think I love, I know that the spirit of idolatry is hindering the flow of love in my heart for God and that person. All I have to do is ask Him to reveal the point or issue of idolatry, and He will. Then I ask Him to release His love, thankfulness, and joy in my heart toward them."

Chapter 11: Repentance and Faith _____

Part 1: Chapter Review

1. What does repentance mean?

2. Read 2 Cor. 7:9-11 (page 77). What is the “sorrow of the world?” Why does it produce death?

3. Read 2 Cor. 7:9-11 (page 77). What does “repentance without regret” mean?

4. Can a person experience repentance *with* regret? Why or why not?

5. What is required to experience repentance (page 78)?

6. What does godly sorrow for sin require (pages 77-78)?

7. How does a godly sorrow for sin develop (page 78)?

8. What does the sin of idolatry equal in God’s eyes (page 79)?

9. What will eternity be like for those who habitually practice idolatry (page 81)?

10. What is the key to receiving repentance (page 81)?

11. What are the first two components of repentance, and what do they mean (page 82)?

12. What characteristic is associated with repentance (page 82)? Why is it required for repentance?

13. What can we do to partner with God in giving us the grace of a contrite heart (page 82)?

14. What attitudes can hinder experiencing contrition (page 82)?

15. What can happen to someone's relationship with God if he or she professes Christ without experiencing repentance (page 84)? Why?

16. When God exposes sin, what confidence can we have (page 86)?

Part 2: Getting Real

Review the Scriptures concerning idolatry on pages 80-81. If at this point you are seeing evidence of the spirit of idolatry in your life, you can be sure God is beginning the work of repentance. Allow God to bring you to that place of godly sorrow as you meditate on the truth, ponder your sin, and consider how you've grieved God. As He completes the work of repentance that leads to deliverance from idolatry, you will begin to be equipped to love with God's love. Realize that this may take some time.

Part 3: Faith Stretch

Begin practicing positioning yourself for the lifelong work of repentance and growth. As you do so, consider the following Scriptures, and let God guide you through the process. (In particular, if the discussion on pages 82-83 regarding true repentance and salvation concerned you, have no fear in going to God in humility and honesty and asking Him why your heart is troubled. Trust Him to speak to you about any need for repentance and to guide you to peace with Him.)

Acts 2:37: "When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'" When the people heard about God and the depth of their sin while Peter was preaching, they knew the truth. The Holy Spirit convicted their hearts with this truth, and they experienced deep sorrow for their sins (contrition). If you have never deeply grieved over your sin or don't have peace in your relationship with God, you may want to study some of the Scriptures regarding sin and salvation. Our hearts are deceptive, and we tend to be proud and rationalize. We need to know the truth about sin from God's word. If we take time to meditate on God's truth and our own sin, God will work conviction and contrition in us.

Luke 7: 4: "...her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." Once we experience deep godly sorrow for sin and humbly seek forgive-

ness, God reveals His love for us, and we receive His supernatural peace. This compels us to deeply love Him. If you struggle to love God or are disappointed, disillusioned, or easily frustrated spiritually, you are likely struggling with idolatry in your relationship with God. Ask Him to help you through the process of experiencing true repentance for your idolatry. The Scriptures on pages 80-81 should help.

Phil. 2:12-13: "... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." We need to continue in the process of being cleansed and formed into the Image of Christ. We will be at it for a lifetime. Know that experiencing repentance for different areas of sin and even initially for salvation can take time. It is a work of God, not of ourselves. However, we need to partner with Him in the process and allow Him to work His plan in us in His way and His timing.

Part 4: Memory Verse

1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Part 5: Group Discussion

1. The author makes the statement that "if you've never seen the root of your sin, it may be that you're not yet a Christian." Explain why this may be the case. What is missing in the person's experience, and what can the person do?
2. What distinction do you think made Jesus' disciples so radically on-fire for God? (Think about the story of Mary of Bethany, Luke 7:40-47.)
3. Is it possible for Christians today to have such a burning love for God? If so, how?
4. Having studied this chapter on repentance and with an understanding of the sin of idolatry, how would you approach sharing your faith and helping someone come to salvation in Christ?
5. What can we be sure of when God exposes sin (page 86)?
6. List the four key points to remember regarding the work of repentance (page 86).

Part 6: Life Application

Read the first two paragraphs under "Repentance Involves Confession and Conversion" on page 85 and follow the author's suggestions.

Chapter 12: Put on Jesus Christ_____

Part 1: Chapter Review

1. Following repentance, what is the next step we need to do (page 87)?

2. Paul describes what the “new self” looks like. List these characteristics (Col. 3, page 87).

3. What is above all other characteristics that we’re to put on (Col. 3, page 87)?

4. What should rule in our hearts (Col. 3, page 87)?

5. What should our attitude be (Col. 3, page 87)?

6. What changes are needed for us to be able to “put on love” and exemplify peace, thankfulness, and the other characteristics of the “new self” (page 88)?

7. How did the “old self” “love” (page 88)?

8. How does the “new self” love (page 88)?

9. What does the author mean by “People take on a new purpose” (page 88)?

10. What enables us to be patient with others (page 89)?

11. How is it that we are able to be kind to others (page 89)?

12. What understanding keeps us from jealousy (page 89)?

13. What attitude keeps us from bragging and arrogance (page 89)?

14. What is God’s “good purpose” in difficult circumstances (page 89)?

15. What are some important things to remember about being loving in abusive situations?

Part 2: Getting Real

Review Col. 3 (page 87). Before moving on to “putting on the new self,” ask God if there are any areas of the old self He would like to address with you now. God is faithful to work repentance in us and deliver us, particularly when we approach Him in humility, desiring that He purify us. You may want to review the concepts of repentance presented in Chapter 11.

Part 3: Faith Stretch

Review the description of love in 1 Cor. 13 (page 88-89). You may want to incorporate asking God for the grace to demonstrate these traits in your daily time with Him. Love is the greatest gift we have from God, and it is how the world recognizes the children of God. “This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who doesn’t do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother” (1 Jn. 3:10).

Part 4: Memory Verse

1 Jn. 2:10: “Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.”

Part 5: Group Discussion

1. What does “putting on Jesus” mean? Explain how we put on Jesus. What is on us before we put Jesus on? How can we tell when someone has put on Jesus (behavior/character)?
2. What are some changes in attitude and benefits we’ll experience when we put on the new self?
3. In what ways might having the new self on facilitate effective evangelism?
4. List 5 concepts that free us to love for the glory of God (page 90). Explain how each helps us love with God’s love. What did you learn this week in doing the Life Application?

Part 6: Life Application

To begin “putting on the new self,” it’s important to internalize the following concepts. Work through these in your quiet time with God, asking Him which ones you may need more understanding on or to grow in to become one known as a child of God (1 Jn. 3:10).

- Distinguishing between the world’s kind of love and God’s kind of love.
- Understanding that love and idolatry are mutually exclusive.
- Discerning the characteristics of idolatry.
- Receiving repentance for the sin of idolatry.
- Looking to God through Jesus Christ for the ability to love.

Chapter 13: Love Comes from God _____

Part 1: Chapter Review

1. What traits of Jesus demonstrate His freedom from idolatry in how He loved (page 91)?

2. How was Jesus able to go to the cross for us (page 91)?

3. Jesus showed His complete confidence that His Father was in control of His circumstances in His response to Pilot's comment regarding authority. What did Jesus say (page 92)?

4. What is the motive of those born of the Holy Spirit (page 93)?

5. What is the motive of those born of the spirit of idolatry (page 93)?

6. Who does the work of glorifying the Father (page 94)?

7. Why is the desire of natural man to do the work himself (page 94)?

8. What is the desire of the man born of God's Spirit (page 94)?

9. What do we need to do for Jesus to do the work in us (page 94)?

10. How can we practically get positioned for Jesus to work in us (page 94)?

11. What is the first aspect of abiding (page 95)?

12. What is the second aspect of abiding (page 96)?

13. What is the third aspect of abiding (page 99)?

14. What does storing God’s Word in our mind provide (second aspect of abiding) (page 97)?

15. What is a common characteristic of many people we are drawn to because we sense the presence of God in them (second aspect of abiding) (page 97)?

16. If we don’t obey God’s commandments, what does it say about our relationship with Him (third aspect of abiding) (page 97)?

17. When we faithfully learn God’s Word, what can we count on from the Holy Spirit (second and third aspects of abiding) (page 99)?

18. To summarize, what do we need to do for God to be at work in our lives (page 100)?

19. When we do these things, what will God do (page 100)?

Part 2: Getting Real

The last paragraph of the chapter points out that being equipped to love depends on Jesus in you. Love comes from God, and we cannot manufacture it. To love, we need to be abiding in God. In Eph. 6:18, Paul instructs us to “...pray in the Spirit on all occasions.” Have you ever wondered how it might be possible to pray continuously throughout the day?

As we practice the three components of abiding outlined in Chapter 13, our hearts will become tuned to God at all times. As we stay focused, the Holy Spirit begins to prompt us to pray for guidance, wisdom, His touch, etc.—for business projects and meetings, for gatherings with unsaved friends, for the child we see crying in the grocery store—for all things at all times. Soon, our thoughts become prayers, and our desires turn into actions of obedience. This week, ask God which aspect(s) of abiding He would like you to further develop.

The Faith Stretch below may help you identify new habits to implement to help you grow.

Part 3: Faith Stretch

Begin practicing the three aspects of abiding in God, if you don’t already have these habits solidly in place. This will position you to have Jesus work in and through you. His love will flow through you to others, bringing glory to the Father, and you will know God’s love for you.

The three habits are:

1. **Pray always**—If prayer is new to you, or you're not sure where to start, several prayers of Paul are recorded in the New Testament that you can personalize for yourself and others. These include (Col. 1:3-13, Eph. 1:16-19, and Phil. 1:9-11). Many of the Psalms are prayers you can use to get started, then expand the concepts with your own words. Many of David's psalms are wonderful examples of how we are to pour out our hearts to God—and how God begins to restore our confidence in Him and His goodness, despite the difficulties of our circumstances.

Of course, there is the Lord's prayer in Mat. 6:9-13. Remember, Jesus said this is "how" you should pray (Mat. 6:9). Each component of the Lord's prayer identifies a general concept for prayer. For example, asking for your "daily bread" involves asking God to speak to you His word for that day that draws you into deeper relationship with Him. It also involves asking in faith for natural needs. You may need His favor and wisdom for a business meeting or physical strength to manage a long day ahead of you. Perhaps you need His provision of employment, a home, etc. Ask specifically for the things you need. Remember that the Lord's prayer does not comprise exact words to keep repeating. There is no power in repetition of the words themselves (Mat. 6:7). We need to pray from the heart specific requests with faith in Jesus.

2. **Eat God's Word always**—If getting into the Word is new to you, a good place to start is with the direct words from Jesus in the New Testament, either the book of John or Mark. Also, Paul's letters, like Galatians, Philippians, and Ephesians, provide practical instruction.
3. **Obey out of love**—The Bible says that if we don't obey God, then we don't love Him. When you sense He is asking you to act in faith and obey, remember you can trust the Father. God promises His commands are not burdensome (1 Jn. 5:3).

Part 4: Memory Verse

Jn. 14:23: "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will make our home with him."

Part 5: Group Discussion

1. What characteristics of Jesus do we need to possess to love the way He loved (page 91)? How do we develop that character?
2. If "God's giving His love isn't a response to a person's praying, serving, and sacrificing for the Kingdom," then what does move God to respond (page 94)? Why is this so?
3. At what point can we know that God's love is perfected in us (the point at which we know we are loved by God) (page 101)? Is there a time when you've experienced this? Explain.
4. What are three concepts to remember about how God's love flows through us (page 102)? Explain how each of these works to allow God's love to flow in us.

Part 6: Life Application

As you practice abiding in God, He will provide opportunities for you to love with His love, and you will be equipped to love because you have been in His presence.

Chapter Review Answers

Chapter 1

1. The primary goal of the “world’s kind of love” is to get or to use.
2. When we love the world, we are motivated by:
 - (1) “The lust of the flesh,” which involves things the body craves, like food or sex.
 - (2) “The lust of the eyes,” which involves things that our soul (mind, will, and emotions) craves, like worldly entertainment or material possessions.
 - (3) “The pride of life,” which involves things that glorify self, like success, beauty, or popularity.

Note: The lust of the eyes and the pride of life are not mutually exclusive because pride is an issue of the soul; there is significant overlap in the examples that fit into either category.
3. When people trapped by the world’s type of love say they love someone or something, they actually mean that they *value* people or things; in other words, they find them useful in satisfying the things they crave when they love the world.
4. When we only have the world’s kind of love and motivations in us, we will “love” people who are easy to love because they have something we want (can satisfy our worldly cravings), and we can get it from them.
5. To make these relationships what we want them to be, we get selfish and controlling, which often leads to jealousy, anger, being easily offended, etc.
6. The world’s type of love is selfish, focused on “what’s in it for me,” and motivated by worldly cravings. This makes these relationships highly unstable and full of quarrelling and offenses.
7. God’s love is missing from people who love selfishly, and they have a deep, painful emptiness they seek to fill in the only way they know how.
 - 1) When we are filled with God’s love, we seek to give and to serve because the emptiness has been filled by God, and His compassion in us compels us to love others with God’s kind of love.
9. b. As objects of God’s love, we are useless, but in need of love.
10. We are valuable because, in our completely needy state, we draw on God for love. This releases God’s love in and through us to the people we touch.

Chapter 2

1. The sin of idolatry involves looking to people and things to supply what only God can supply.
2. (1) Immorality (sexual): slowly gains access, one subtle compromise at time. It is behavior that is contrary to what we know to be right. Regarding sexual behavior, it’s any sexual activity outside of marriage as well as any sexual activity within marriage that is not motivated by love. It is idolatry because it is behavior that seeks pleasure in ungodly ways rather than finding pleasure in God.

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- (2) Impurity: contaminated, corrupt, defiled, or dirty. This has to do with the heart—wrong motives that lead to deception, idolatry, and immorality—or impurity in thought. Examples: A man helping his neighbor with a home project because he wants a job at his neighbor's business or someone struggling with pornography.
 - (3) Passion (lust): an intense, obsessive desire or craving for worldly pleasure, like being obsessed with food, sex, power or position, etc.
 - (4) Evil desire(s): desire for what is morally wrong. This is a result of having need and not seeking God to get those needs met.
 - (5) Greed: driven by lust, greed is an overwhelming desire for more than we need, a state of never being satisfied, no matter how much we have, often really a fear of deprivation.
3. People struggling with the sin of idolatry believe that God can't meet their needs and that they have to control the world around them to get their needs met.
 4. God is fully able to meet all of our needs. He created us, and He knows exactly what we need. His focus is on what is best for us, which is forming us into His Image. He will not provide for our selfish desires, but He always gives us exactly what we need.
 5. Insubordination and rebellion are the result of having self as an idol. Instead of obeying the First Commandment to love and worship God, we worship ourselves and refuse to obey God.
 6. When we want someone to do things our way, we may try to convince that person that his or her behavior is wrong. We may throw Biblical principles, business principles, examples of how others we respect do things, etc. to get the person to change. We might be tempted to tell our parents of our successes, knowing that children easily become idols for parents, thus allowing ourselves to become their idols when we hear their flattery.
 7. True agape love takes place in a relationship only when the relationship is free of idolatry and the individuals know that God is the source of everything. Agape love in a relationship breaks down the moment we look to a person to supply our needs; that is the point at which it becomes idolatrous because we are replacing God with the person.
 8. The typical man-centered concept of God's goodness is that God is watching out for our comfort and happiness.
 9. The true God-centered definition of God's goodness is that He is on a mission to form us into His Image. This is for His glory. It is to our ultimate good because it aligns us with the one true source of all our needs, but it requires trials and suffering to get there, not comfort.
 10. God is the initiator and controller of all things for His glory, His good, and His purposes.
 11. When we look to another person to make us happy or comfortable, we give that person the power to make us miserable. Example: wanting a spouse to take you out. Instead, the spouse gets involved in other things and gets home late, so you don't go out. This can make us angry and resentful (miserable). We need to be so full of God's love that we can more easily adapt to the disappointments in life. It is when we are running on empty, looking to people and things to meet our needs, that these disappointments become significant frustrations.
 12. When we don't believe that God can meet all of our needs, we turn to people and things to meet our needs, thus making them idols.

13. We can't love someone we idolize because our "loving" actions toward them are really controlling and manipulative in order to get things from them, not giving as real love would be.
14. Lesson 1: You can't love someone you idolize.
Lesson 2: Your relationship with Jesus is foundational to your being equipped to love.

Chapter 3

1. Adam sought knowledge so that he would no longer need God to direct him. This is a spirit of independence, focused on pleasing self, where the soul (mind, will, and emotions) is no longer submitted to the spirit. Seeking knowledge kills us spiritually because we stop feeding from the Tree of Life, where we are directed by the Holy Spirit, and, instead, feed from the Tree of Knowledge to serve self.
2. Seeking knowledge is idolatrous because it leads to independence from God and looking to ourselves, instead of God, to meet our needs. The focus of this study is not idolatrous because we are learning about behaviors and motives that harm our relationship with God, and our intent in learning is to draw closer to God, not be independent from Him.
3. The spirit of idolatry deceives people into believing that they can find fulfillment and happiness from sources other than God.
4. When people are deceived spiritually, they are in bondage and blocked from growing and being set free. They continue in emotional pain and idolatrous relationships because they don't know any other way to behave.
5. Our hearts deceive us, making us unable to see our selfish motives. We do not have the ability to discern what is true; therefore, we are not grieved over the impure motives of our hearts and cannot see why there is need for change. The Bible says that "God weighs the motives" in Proverbs 16:2, so we can ask God to show us our motives, then trust Him to fill us with His love and change us when He does.
6. If we think the definition of God's goodness is to make us happy and comfortable, we will begin to feel God has abandoned us and will turn to things other than God when we are suffering or experiencing trials. The truth is that God is forming us into His Image, which involves suffering. If we understand the truth, we will turn to God for the help and grace we need during trials and will experience greater revelation of His love and will be changed.
7. Romans 8:26 tells us that we are weak because we don't know how to pray. Jesus and the Holy Spirit pray according to the will of the Father for us.

Chapter 4

1. If we worship God and look to Him for our needs, He meets them according to His will and purposes without any manipulation or control on our part. However, if we expect people to meet our needs, we have a problem. They can't provide what God provides, and we are usually after self-centered desires and comfort. We will constantly be trying to manipulate and control them (making them an idol) and will be left frustrated and empty.
2. Looking to a creature, object, or idea to be the source of provision, comfort, happiness, or power.
3. Self-centered.

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4. Being under the influence of the spirit of idolatry leads to manipulative and controlling behavior toward the person(s) being idolized because we are looking to them as the source of our supply instead of to God. We also have self-centered desires and comforts we expect them to meet. When they fail us, we start trying to control and manipulate them to change.
5. Words or actions designed to get others to do what we want, when we want.
6. Words or actions we know others will like that are designed to get them to do what we want, when we want. Example: flattery. They are deceptive to people being carved on because they believe the carver loves them. They are deceptive to the carver because the carver actually believes he or she is being nice or good when really the motive is to get something.

Remember, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.” (Jeremiah 17: 9-10) Note: Chapter 17 in Jeremiah discusses how God feels when we trust man and not God for our needs (idolatry).

7. Words or actions perceived as destructive or hurtful that are designed to get others to do what we want, when we want. Six common negative carving tools are anger, malice (desire to harm others), abusive speech, wrath (violent, resentful anger), slander (defamatory statements that hurt the person’s reputation), and lying.
8. Idolatry. We have to relinquish our rights to have things our way and rely on Jesus’ power to love through us. This requires really believing that Christ is in control and that what we have is what we need. As we turn to God, He will give us grace to love in difficult situations.
9. If you’re offended by someone or upset with a situation.

Chapter 5

1. He was appealing to the inborn desire every person naturally has to belong, to not miss out, and to be happy.
2. It is focused on man’s selfish desires and not on recognizing our sinfulness and need for God to cleanse us. It is the classic wrong mindset that God’s goodness means making us happy.
3. It can make people think salvation is just a matter of praying to get something from God.
4. The Holy Spirit must be at work in our hearts, teaching us Truth and convicting our hearts of sin. If we are merely convinced of some facts about God and our need intellectually, we will not have experienced full salvation. Salvation is a work of God in the spirit (heart), evidenced by fruit of the lips. Romans 10:9-10 says, “That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.”
6. The Holy Spirit convicts our hearts of sin and our need for right standing before God. The Spirit speaks to us of God’s provision of righteousness through the Lord Jesus Christ, and we believe. We pray to God, desiring relationship with Him and offering Him our lives. We believe we receive forgiveness of our sin on the basis of the faith God has given us.

6. If we fail to understand God's character and purposes, we will tend to do positive carving on God by performing for Him, then will expect certain blessings from him or outcomes of circumstances. We may grow angry and resentful or think God doesn't love us. These experiences warp our image of God and His love for us, and we may begin to turn away from loving God.
7. The person will become miserable and bitter when God doesn't deliver what he wants when he wants it.
8. Anger and slander. Angry at God, people will sometimes point to some painful experience to justify rejecting God. Others will try to mock God or believers, pointing to painful or unjust events to "prove" that faith in God is foolish.

Chapter 6

1. The main purpose for having an idol is to fulfill our selfish ambitions or gain for ourselves.
2. The spirit of idolatry brings out our selfishness, and we insist on having what we want, when we want it. We become selfish when we don't believe God's plans for us are better than our plans for ourselves.
3. Idolaters make idols because they are focused on satisfying the demands of self.
4. At the heart of most misery, depression, anger, and frustration is a disenchanting, disillusioned, disappointed self-love. This is because when our focus is on pleasing ourselves, we have selfish desires and rely on others to meet those desires and make us feel loved. They will always disappoint us because they are selfish just like us. Even at the times when they don't disappoint us, we are still left feeling empty if we are looking to them for our needs.
5. There are two kinds of self-love—one that flows out of complete love and submission to God (the First Commandment) and one that rejects the First Commandment and loves the world. The Second Commandment to "love your neighbor as yourself" assumes the First Commandment to love God with our whole being is being obeyed.

Also, the Bible speaks of "considering others before ourselves." Paul spoke of being "poured out as a drink offering for others." Jesus gave even His very life for others. We are to do the same. The only way we can do this is if our true needs are being met by God. Then, we no longer worry about ourselves but focus on what matters to God.

6. Only those words and actions that flow out of the life of Jesus Christ bring glory to God and can be categorized as "good" by God's standards.
7. Self-sins include self-gratification, self-indulgence, and self-significance. Others include self-respect, self-sufficiency, and self-righteousness. They cause us to look to others rather than God because God won't meet our selfish desires. Self-respect and self-sufficiency are forms of self-idolatry because they identify with self as the provider and not God as our provider.
8. They reflect man's interests rather than God's. They cause us to be selfish and look to idols.
9. Because we have the idol of self in the way, we are deceived into thinking that what we want is good and worthy when it is in reality opposed to God's will.
10. We're to deny self (our natural desires) and take up our cross and follow Jesus. This means to lay down our natural self will and seek God's will for our lives.

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11. In James 3:14-15, the apostle described a wisdom that does not come down from above but is earthly, natural, and demonic. What was the motivation behind such wisdom? Self-ambition. In Chapter 4:7-8, James identifies what we need to do. We are to submit ourselves to God's will (a rejection of our self-ambition), resist the devil, and draw near to God (as our only source of supply).
12. Jesus' love is self-less.
13. Jesus found fulfillment in his relationship with the Father. He completely trusted the Father for all of his needs. We can find fulfillment in the Father too.

Chapter 7

1. We will be empty and useless like the idols we make. We only become useful by being full of God.
2. These are all created things that have no power in themselves to supply the fullness our souls long for and that only God can supply.
3. Idolatry replaces God as our first love, breaking the First Commandment, a very serious sin.
4. Ourselves. I strive at work to impress others so they will think I am capable me. I try to look nice so my husband will think I'm beautiful. I serve friends so they will think I'm a loving person.
5. We start performing for God because we don't understand that He supplies everything we need to be pleasing to Him by simply coming to Him and loving and worshipping Him. We need His supply to do anything that has eternal value. Everything we do ourselves is of no eternal value and will just be "burned in the fire." (1 Cor. 3:15)
6. This means that we perform to meet others expectations of us—even God's—in exchange for perceived love and approval. Idolatry is the root of this behavior.
7. "... to be like God."
8. Satan.
9. His glory.
10. We are trying to be independent from God—rebellious, not submitting our lives to God.
11. The sources of our supply appear to be good, right, and noble.
12. Your decisions and actions flow out of revelation from God because of a close relationship with Jesus. You use your knowledge, talents, and experience to implement what God tells you.
13. Any decision made outside of relationship with Jesus has potential for being idolatrous. For example, we might make a decision for Jesus from accepting the facts and not by being drawn by the Spirit. This would lead to expecting something from God in exchange, which is idolatrous, versus coming to him in humility, recognizing our need, and with love in response to the revelation of His love by His Spirit.
14. Confess our sin of idolatry and pursue fellowship with Jesus. Then we will become channels of God's love for His glory.

Chapter 8

1. Insatiable appetite, quickly dissatisfied.
2. The idolater finds someone or something else he or she can more easily manipulate.
3. We end up with an “idol trail”—a number of broken relationships and people we’ve hurt. We look to people to supply our selfish desires. We learn to carve on them to get them to do what we want. When they no longer readily do what we want, we move on to other idols.
4. We believe that we are our own god, responsible for getting what we want and doing what we please.
5. God as the one who is in control and who does whatever He pleases.
6. People don’t know how to love (they’re idolatrous, wanting the other to “make them happy”). It is not necessarily that they were a wrong match.
7. The pattern of broken relationships catches up to us. Eventually, we reap the pain we sow, wounded and alone with a load of guilt.
8. We worship and serve many idols, looking to them as the source of our needs.
9. It means that looking to God for all of our needs and waiting for His timing and His way of supplying those needs is what worship is all about. It includes being thankful and obedient.
10. We put them in the place of God, where they are worshipped and served by us because we are looking to them to make us happy. We do what they want, seeking to please them, for fear we otherwise won’t get what we want from them. They now have the power to make us miserable and angry—especially when they stop responding to our carving and we sense they are using us.
11. (1) We often feel justified in our anger and disappointed in ourselves for letting people control us because we are so needy. We may also come to believe we don’t know how to choose quality people in our relationships. (2) We think that if they love us, they should treat us the way we want (serve us). (3) We may shut down emotionally, stop trusting people, or find idols other than people—like food, drugs, etc.
12. We can repent of our idolatry—looking to people instead of God as our source of supply. We also need to take responsibility for making ourselves an idol and serving our selfish desires.
13. We can repent, then seek forgiveness from those in our current relationships. We need to release others from our idolatrous expectations (what we want to get from them).

Chapter 9

1. When God judges the sin in our lives.
2. He “gives us over” to our sin. The purpose is to make us aware of sin we can’t otherwise see.
3. Their hearts had become idolatrous (pride, independence), and they could not recognize their sin.
4. The sin that was in their hearts began to be acted upon in their lives. The sin that was hidden to them and to others was now obvious to everyone.
5. What we “sow” is multiplied back to us later. Our idolatrous behavior that doesn’t seem like

Equipped to Love Study Guide

much now will result in a great deal of pain later.

6. Those with whom we have relationships develop idolatrous behavior in response to our idolatrous behavior. Also, our children learn it from us.
7. Any behavior toward others designed to get something in return is idolatrous. This example is a form of positive carving. Parents should teach their children to be nice to others because that is what God commands, not so that they can get others to be nice to them.
8. To expose our idolatry of not looking to him exclusively as our source of supply.
9. God withholds grace to love, allowing our frustration, anger, etc. to surface so that we will see our sin of idolatry.

We should repent and draw on God for his grace.

10. Training.
11. Like His children.
12. It is unbelief in God as our complete source of supply that makes us turn to other sources for what we need (idolatry).
13. His discipline (training) because we have lost our focus on Jesus. This will expose sin (idolatry) and lead us to repentance.
14. Righteousness.
15. God's method of training is often the painful exposure of sin.
He often uses relationships that show us the spirit of idolatry at work.
16. We think that the problem is the other person.
However, the real problem is that we have made the person an idol that we worship and serve. We are not worshipping and serving God only.
17. We should try to identify how idolatry may be involved in the relationship, looking at problem actions or ideas that have been established.
We should repent of idolatry in the relationship and go to God for the grace to love.
18. That God is not responsible for any of the tragedies or hardships that befall men.

Chapter 10

1. No. Their "love" is selfish, based on what they get out of the relationship. When God is not giving them what they want when they want it, they will hate Him.
2. "If it be your will, Lord, for me to suffer, then give me grace" or "Glorify Yourself, Lord, in my situation."
3. Idolatry.
4. Such an unstable relationship is founded in idolatry, where each individual is seeking to get from the other person. The degree to which each person succeeds in carving on the other to get what he/she wants determines the ever-changing status of the relationship.
5. No. Such individuals will carve on the other person to get needs met and selfish desires fulfilled.

Equipped to Love Study Guide

Loving with God's love requires looking to God for our needs and loving others by His grace.

6. That God is focused on pleasing man rather than man created by God for His purposes.
7. We're born idolaters—users, getters, looking for a life of comfort and happiness right now.
8. We feel weak and empty and begin to seek God to make us feel better about ourselves.
9. We begin to recognize we are sinners and need God to cleanse us.
10. Compatible with his own thinking.
11. That God requires what we cannot perform ourselves.
12. Idolaters want to believe they can make themselves good enough for God. God's righteous standards make this impossible. God says, "our righteousness is as filthy rags," and we need to rely on God's provision for salvation.
13. Hatred of God.

When we hate the people God brings in our lives we are really saying that we don't like God being in charge.

14. We don't like what God has chosen for us, and we don't like Him being in charge.
15. When He reveals Himself to us. "Until then, our god is a god of our own making."
16. When we recognize they are sent to us by God and in humility ask God for the grace to love.

Chapter 11

1. Repentance means to experience such deep sorrow over sin that we decide to change or turn away from the sin.
2. The "sorrow of the world" involves remorse over being caught and/or suffering the consequences of sin. It leads to death because it does not lead to repentance and salvation.
3. "Repentance without regret" means that we now hate the sin and truly don't want to repeat it.
4. No. True repentance requires hating the sin. To "regret" actually means that we "miss" the sin and "regret" the decision to turn from it—that is, we don't hate it. We can, however, experience conviction and confession because we know sin is wrong, asking God for forgiveness. When this happens, since the person has not experienced repentance, he/she will continue to struggle with that sin, following a cycle of sinning, conviction, confession, and sinning again. The person has not been delivered and has no power to resist the sin.
5. Repentance requires godly sorrow.
6. Godly sorrow for sin requires an understanding of God's hatred of that sin as revealed in God's word and by His Spirit.
7. A godly sorrow for sin is a work of God that follows conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will teach us and pierce our hearts with the pain of knowing how God feels about the sin as we study His word regarding that sin. Then we will understand how desperate we are for cleansing and deliverance.
8. The sin of idolatry equals spiritual adultery or unfaithfulness in God's eyes.

Equipped to Love Study Guide

9. Those who *habitually* practice idolatry will not be spending eternity with God, even if they profess to be Christians. The truth is, they have not yet experienced salvation because they have not identified with themselves as sinners needing God's cleansing. That is, they have not experienced true repentance.
10. The key to receiving repentance is knowledge of the truth of what God's word says regarding areas of sin because this leads to godly sorrow.
11. The first two components of repentance are conviction and contrition. Conviction is the awareness of sin as revealed by the Holy Spirit. Contrition is the experience of deep sorrow over the sin, characterized by humility because of the guilt.
12. The characteristic associated with repentance is faith.

It gives us hope that, in God, we can change. We take steps of obedience to change, believing that God is empowering and delivering us. In faith, we study the Word, meditate, take actions to avoid temptation, etc.
13. We can partner with God to receive the grace of a contrite heart by meditating on our sinfulness and need, what it deserves, how we have hurt God, etc.
14. Attitudes that hinder experiencing contrition include rationalization (it's not really that bad), rebellion (I don't really want to change), pride/self-righteousness (I'm a good person; I do all these good things), blame (it's not my fault), unforgiveness (I've been hurt or wronged), etc.
15. When someone professes Christ without experiencing repentance the person may experience a lack of love for Jesus. People like this don't know how much God has forgiven. They don't hate their sin. They only want God for what they can get because they didn't come to God out of their need for cleansing.
16. When God exposes sin, we can know that God is ready to deliver us from that sin.

Chapter 12

1. "Put on the new self."
2. Characteristics of the "new self" are a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience; bearing with one another and forgiving each other.
3. Love is above all other characteristics we're to put on.
4. The peace of Christ should rule in our hearts.
5. Our attitude should be thankful.
6. We need to experience repentance from the sin of idolatry before we can "put on love" and exemplify peace, thankfulness, and the other characteristics of the "new self."
7. The "old self" "loved" by carving on and manipulating people for its own use.
8. The "new self" loves by seeking to be used to benefit and serve others.
9. "People take on a new purpose" means that we no longer look to people for what they can do for us but as opportunities to love with the love of Christ and glorify our Lord.
10. We can be patient with others because we are no longer trying to get things from others; we

receive what we need from God. The circumstances of our relationships with others is exactly what we need to keep us dependent on God.

11. We are able to be kind to others because we're not selfishly wanting them to serve us.
12. Knowing that God is the supplier of all things keeps us from jealousy.
13. Gratefulness for His goodness and provision keeps us from bragging and arrogance.
14. God's "good purpose" in difficult circumstances is providing an opportunity to trust and love.
15. Some important things to remember about being loving in abusive situations include praying, being forgiving, and seeking reconciliation, if possible.

Chapter 13

1. The characteristics of Jesus that demonstrated His freedom from idolatry include: He always believed everything He needed came from His Father, including His need for love. He never *expected* people to serve Him, love Him, or give to Him. He came only to worship and serve His Father. When Jesus' disciples, filled with God's love after having been with Him, were able to love Him in return with God's love, He had joy in seeing the fruit of His labor. He did not need people to love Him to be complete and fulfilled. He was fully satisfied in His relationship with His Father.
2. Jesus was able to go to the cross for us because He completely trusted His Father's love for Him and that His Father always gave Him just what He needed to express the Father's glory. When we are positioned such that our lives bring God glory, we experience the Father's pleasure in us, His love is completed in us, and our souls are satisfied. In stark contrast, earthly pleasures are temporary and lead to feeling dissatisfied and empty.
3. He said, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above."
4. That the Father would glorify Himself through His Son *in them*. They pray, love, and obey for this reason.
5. To avoid going to hell or to want God to make them comfortable and happy. They pray, love with the world's kind of love, and obey for this reason.
6. Jesus.
7. To gain approval.
8. To see Jesus do the work and receive the glory.
9. To see Jesus do the work in us, we need to ask the Father to glorify Jesus in us, and He will.
10. We practically get positioned for Jesus to work in us by staying in constant awareness of Him and in communication with Him (abide in Him).
11. To pray continuously (constant dialog), recognizing our neediness and powerlessness.
12. To "eat" God's Word, which means to read, meditate, be taught by the Holy Spirit, and fellowship with Him, receiving *rhema*.
13. To obey because of love.
14. A place for us to abide with Jesus.

Equipped to Love Study Guide

15. We sense the presence of God in people filled with God's Word.
16. That we don't love God.
17. We can count on the Holy Spirit bringing the Word we need to our conscious memory when we need it to love.
18. We need to eat God's Word, pray, and obey for God to be at work in our lives (abide in Him).
19. Jesus will pray to the Father to send the Holy Spirit to help us when we pray according to His will and desire to step out to love as He commands. Jesus will love others through us.

Group Discussion Answers

Chapter 1

1. According to I Jn. 4:7-8, those who don't love with God's kind of love don't know God. To fill pews and count decisions for Christ, God's love has been reduced to something God does for us to make us happy and significant (the world's idea of love). Consequently, churches are filled with people who think they have been loved by God, who have not really experienced God's love or known Him in truth. Others, ignorant of the distinction between the world's kind of love and God's kind of love, are hindered by the spirit of idolatry in their relationship with God and others. Until a person loves with God's love, he can have no confidence that he knows God (I John 4:13). Much like the Corinthian Christians, he is shallow in both his experience with God and in loving with God's love. Therefore, he needs to learn to distinguish between the world's kind of love and God's kind of love. As he takes steps to lay down his life and give to others—expecting nothing in return, he will discover the power of his own sin and selfishness. Such a discovery results in a deeper awareness of his need and appreciation for God's grace—that He gives righteousness expecting nothing in return! Experiencing that kind of love firsthand becomes the fountain of God's kind of love in his life.
2. Our reactions to difficult people and situations reveal the depth and reality of our relationship with God. If we react selfishly and are easily offended and angered, we can be sure that we need to spend more time with God and grow in our understanding of His love. However, we are all in process on learning to love with God's love, and it's important to use these circumstances as a helpful evaluating tool rather than being hard on yourself.
3. (a) When the source of love is self, it is selfish in nature; when the source of love is God, it is characterized by the qualities of 1 Corinthians 13 (patient, kind, not jealous, humble, courteous, giving, concerned for others, and gentle).
(b) God first meets our need for love. Being used by God comes from the overflow of the love we have received from Him.
(c) God's kind of love requires faith because we must first be convinced God can meet all our needs for love. Otherwise, we will continue to try to get our needs met by controlling others.
(d) The world's kind of love is characterized by control, manipulation, and jealousy because we are depending on others to get our needs met, and we fear that won't happen if we don't control our relationships. Example: flattering someone from whom you want something.
(e) God's kind of love never fails because it comes from God, not us.
(f) When people are filled with God's love, they are so satisfied that they are compelled to share it. They are not focused on the pain of suffering because they are overwhelmed by God's love. (Paul said "love compels me," and Jesus told Paul that he would suffer much for God.)
(g) Focused on eternal values means that we are focused on things that last like character versus immediate gratification. An example is being concerned for a person's salvation versus what you want them to do for you.
(h) The selfish love of man is divisive, while God's type of love seeks the welfare of others. Js. 3:13-16, Titus 3:9-10, and 1 Cor. 13 provide further insight.

Equipped to Love Study Guide

(i) The facts that God's kind of love is based on include God's unchangeable character—love, mercy, goodness, faithfulness, etc.—and His many promises. It has nothing to do with how you feel. Feelings can deceive us. Our behavior is a result of what we believe. If our thinking is confused, we will begin to have ungodly behavior.

(j) When we love with the world's kind of love, we are easily angered and offended because we are looking to people for what only God can supply.

(k) When we aren't full of God's love, in our need we lust after worldly things to satisfy the emptiness. The world cannot fill this emptiness; only God can. That is why people are never satisfied, no matter how much money, fame, or success they achieve.

(l) When we are full of God's love, we are compelled to love others with God's love. We “get full” by being in God's presence, meditating on what God has done for us in Christ, giving thanks to God for all things, and submitting ourselves to God's will (Eph. 5:18-21). We constantly need to be filled with the Holy Spirit, especially as we are used by God to give and serve others. Otherwise, we will burn out because we start to run on empty.

4. People will be changed and will want what we have.
5. Loving with God's love requires a close relationship with God, where our own need is satisfied. We can't give what we don't have. When we are filled with God's love, our love of others becomes the overflow of God's abundant love in us. It is really God in us loving others.

Note: Receiving God's love is often a major point of difficulty for people. Past wounds can hinder our ability to receive God's love. We may think we are unworthy of forgiveness or be angry with God, feeling he's been unfair, etc. These wrong mindsets need to change. If you're struggling with receiving God's love, take time to ask God why. Renounce the wrong beliefs He shows you and begin believing the truths of God's word, including:

Rom. 8:1: “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Rom. 8:28: “ ... all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purposes.”

Rom. 8:31: “If God is for us, who can be against us?”

Jn. 15:13: “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.”

Jer. 29:11: “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.’”

Chapter 2

1. It is essential to understand what specifically God supplies and the way we go about finding less satisfying substitutes for them in the world. According to Mike Bickle, International House of Prayer (IHOP), Kansas City, there are seven “longings of the soul.” These create a deep emptiness in us designed by God to compel us to seek Him as the Bride of Christ described in the *Song of Songs*. These longings run so deep and strong in us that, to the degree we do not learn to develop an intimate relationship with God, we will most certainly try to get these longings met in idolatrous ways. The world's perverted substitute for God's perfect design can never satisfy us, and we will always feel empty and be controlling to get more, trying to fill the emptiness.

Equipped to Love Study Guide

We have all experienced the world’s counterfeit to God’s design to varying levels as follows:

Longing	God’s Design	The World’s Counterfeit
1. To be fascinated	Experiencing the beauty of God through revelation (Isaiah records these types of experiences)	Worldly entertainment (fantasy, supernatural themes); witchcraft and divination (psychics, horoscopes, numerology); science/tech.
2. To possess beauty (or to feel beautiful)	Identifying with God seeing us as beautiful—the doctrine of the Bride of Christ (Song of Songs)	Achieving outward beauty (e.g., body-building, plastic surgery) or soul beauty (kindness, giving, etc.)
3. To be desired (or pursued)	Experiencing the burning love of God as He pursues us into relationship with Him—the Bride of Christ (Song of Songs)	Behaving in ways that attract people to us (flirting, dressing sexy; doing things to get people to like/love us)
4. To be great (or to be significant or important)	Identifying with being enthroned next to Jesus in heaven; the joy of working with Jesus on earth	Striving for earthly successes and wanting people to think we’re smart, talented, important, etc.
5. To be intimate (to know and be known)	Intimacy with God (Gen. 2:25 to be “naked and unashamed”)	Desiring closeness with others out of neediness (soulish, idolatrous)
6. To be passionate	The First Commandment; loving God with our entire being	Seeking the excitement of new relationships, often lust, not love
7. To share what is exciting about our experiences with others	Sharing the excitement of our relationship and experiences with God with others	Sharing what we know and experience, are excited about, etc. (e.g., winning the lottery)

2. We will deceive ourselves into believing we are being loving if we do not rightly discern the spirit of idolatry. If we fail to discern this spirit and love out of our emptiness, we will be acting in kindness to get something in return. We’ll have idolatrous relationships, always keeping score of what we’ve given out against what we’ve received. If we’ve not received what we expected from others, these unstable relationships will suffer. We must learn to love others as prompted by God—from an overflow of being filled with His love. That way, how we feel about the people we love will no longer depend on their response to our being loving because our needs will already have been met by God.

Example: We go out of our way to do something for a friend. The friend believes we’re being loving and accepts the favor; even we believe we’re being loving. In reality, unless we are truly led by God to do the kindness, we will have in our heart some expectation of that friend because we are being loving out of our neediness. Usually, that expectation will be that we’re the “best friend,” the maid of honor, the one the friend invites to the most intimate events, etc. Then, we’re jealous, angry, and offended if the friend doesn’t treat us the way we expect.

3. As God’s creatures, we are in the humble position of existing completely for His benefit and glory, 100% dependent upon Him for all of our needs. This makes us realize our focus in life is not us, but God. If we are created to be a source of His pleasure, our main motivation in life should be learning how to do just that. The Bible teaches us that to obey, worship, etc. bring him pleasure. We also know that God is love, God is good, we are His children and joint heirs with Jesus, etc. Facts such as these create desire in us to please Him.

4. If we truly believe that God is good, God is sovereign, and whatever we have at any particular moment is exactly what we need, then we will learn to react to circumstances and relationships as allowed by God for His glory and our good in forming us into His Image. That means making sure we're not complaining, asking God what He wants us to learn, and believing Him for His grace, power, and wisdom for victory in difficult and painful situations. We will no longer focus on our pain and suffering (ourselves), but will focus on what God is trying to accomplish.

Example of a new response: We no longer see things that don't go well at work as failures that make us insecure. We begin to see them as God refining and changing us to be more like Him. It's no longer our performance that makes us feel good about ourselves, but our character when our behavior is Christ-like and brings glory to our Father. Then we feel good because our delight and happiness is derived from God's delight and pleasure.

5. We often say we believe God's word, but what we really believe shows up in our behavior. When people have a hard time loving, it means that they don't really believe God supplies all of their needs, even though they may say that they do believe this to be true. Otherwise, they would have had their needs met by God and would find loving others easier.

(a) Behavior based on right beliefs: We speak encouraging, loving words to our neighbor, even though that neighbor is unresponsive toward us. We don't get angry or stop being loving because we feel rejected. We are not looking to the neighbor for acceptance; we have already received acceptance from God.

(b) Behavior based on wrong beliefs: We speak encouraging, loving words to our neighbor, even though that neighbor is unresponsive toward us. We get angry and soon stop being loving because we feel rejected. We are looking to the neighbor for acceptance because we have not experienced acceptance from God. We soon find someone else to "love," hoping that we will experience acceptance with that person.

6. If we don't have a close relationship with Jesus, our needs have not been met by God, and we are not filled with his love. Our efforts to love will only be from our emptiness, motivated by needs that we expect others to meet. This makes this type of love idolatrous. Strengthening our relationship with Jesus requires spending time in the word, in prayer, in worship, etc. If we are just getting started in our relationship with God, it can be challenging when we are used to the immediate gratification of the world. However, God's grace gets us through those initial stages when we don't know God very well or how to relate to Him.

Chapter 3

1. We easily believe the spirit of idolatry's suggestion that there is more than one god because we can't detect our own selfish motives, which God doesn't supply. Therefore, we look elsewhere. When we seek knowledge, we are deceived into believing that we've received the best God has to offer and don't realize we are trying to be independent from God. This spirit also tricks us into thinking we can find fulfillment and happiness in things other than God.

The spirit of idolatry tries to make us think that the world's way of thinking is the same as God's thoughts. Specifically, it tries to make us think that the meaning of "God is good" is that His purpose in our lives is to make us happy and comfortable. The true purpose of our lives is to bring Him glory and pleasure as He forms us into His Image.

Equipped to Love Study Guide

We need to know the truth—what the Bible says—that God alone is the only supplier of all of our needs. We also need to remember that our hearts are deceptive and to ask God to expose the deceptions that bombard our minds. We need to understand and accept that the purpose of our lives is to bring God glory and pleasure. Along with this truth, we need to remember that, as our creator and the lover of our soul, He has a perfect plan—in Him—to meet every longing of our soul. Otherwise, we may grow bitter and seek the world’s pleasures. Finally, developing a thankful heart with a perspective of all of our needs being abundantly supplied by God is important.

2. In short, we will have a pattern of going to God first for all of our needs and seeking to hear from Him—in the word, through prayer, etc.—when we are habitually eating from the Tree of Life. We will recognize a mindset of eating from the Tree of Knowledge when we tend to study, reason things through rather than pray, look to resources in the world rather than the Bible, etc. We will make decisions based on what we think and will not take time in prayer to wait on God and hear what He is saying. Ideas from God will bring peace and love into our decisions. Decisions based on knowledge will come by thinking and striving with a selfish focus on our needs.

The spirit of idolatry tricks us regarding knowledge by making us think that the knowledge we’ve acquired is the best God has for us, so we don’t press in through prayer and really feed from God and experience His life in our decisions and how we operate in our daily lives.

Tree of Knowledge	Tree of Life
Taking management classes and studying various techniques to improve performance and grow in your career	Praying and asking God for supernatural wisdom and discernment, revelation and vision, creative ideas, strategies for working with individuals, etc. Studying the passages in the Bible on business dealings (managing flocks, going into battle, etc.) and leadership (kings)
Reading books on raising children	Reading the passages in the Bible on raising children and asking God to bring enlightenment and specific revelation for your children

3. The essentials of developing a relationship with God that equips us to love are:

Point 1: Believe in God. If we don’t believe our Heavenly Father to be who He says He is (He is Love, His purposes are for our eternal good and His glory, etc.), we will reject His dealings in our lives and focus on how we can make ourselves happy and comfortable. When we believe, we intentionally draw close to be filled with His love that flows to others.

Point 2: Believe in me (Jesus). If we don’t believe that Christ in us empowers us to change and ultimately leads to the eternal satisfaction of our souls, again, we will reject God’s ways. Jesus was human when He walked the earth, having laid down His deity. He was empowered by the Holy Spirit, and lived a life free of idolatry and full of love. We have access to the same power and can live victorious lives by faith in Jesus to change us.

Point 3: Abide in Me by eating My word. We come to know God’s heart and His love for us in the word. The word teaches us how God feels about our behaviors/motives. The Holy Spirit uses the word we’ve brought into our hearts to break our hearts over our sin and to go to God for cleansing and the power and grace to love.

Point 4: Abide in Me by praying about all things. Continuous prayer keeps our focus on God and His life in us and not on ourselves. We stop striving in our relationship with Him and others and start believing He equips us to love as we pray in faith.

Point 5: Abide in Me by obeying Me—love one another. Faith, eating the word, prayer, and obedience are all components of abiding in God. This keeps us full of God all the time (abiding); loving God and one another will be a natural outcome of abiding with God.

Point 6: Know that we are not alone—the Holy Spirit is in us. Knowing the Holy Spirit is in us gives us confidence that He loves us and is training and guiding us to love others.

4. To combat the lies of the spirit of idolatry, we should remember:

Point 1: That God alone is the Source of supply for all that we need. If we truly believe God supplies everything we need, we won't be trying to meet our needs ourselves with idolatrous behavior.

Point 2: To look to God as our Source of supply when we are in need. If we learn to look to God for our provision, we will start to recognize how He meets our needs and will stop looking to other sources.

Point 3: What God supplies is exactly what we need to fulfill His purposes and glorify Him. If we believe that God's supply is what we need for His purposes, we'll learn to lay down our selfish desires. We need to understand that one of His purposes is to reveal Himself and His love, which will satisfy us for eternity.

5. People tend to mean that God's "something better" will be a circumstance that makes us more happy and comfortable. This is often the way idolaters come to terms with God's dealings when they don't understand His purposes. God does have something better in mind—to free us from idolatry and selfishness to love with His kind of love and to have the longings of our souls eternally satisfied as we are formed into His image and He reveals Himself to us.

Chapter 4

1. To humbly acknowledge who God is—the creator of all things and the one upon whom all creation depends for absolutely everything. Worship includes honor and celebration because of who we are to God—He loves us and accepts us as children and joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). Though we are in the humble place of utter dependency on God for everything, He loves us as children, and everything He has is ours (our inheritance as children).
2. According to Webster's Dictionary, an idol is someone or something that is blindly or excessively adored. We are obsessed with the object of our affections because the idol is giving us something we want. An idol is anything taking God's rightful first place in our hearts.

Idolatry is the state of having an unhealthy affection for someone or something (an idol) because that "idol" is giving us something we want. So we "worship" (obsessively adore) it. It is a heart condition where someone or something has replaced God as our first love, and we now believe idols are at least part of our source of supply.

An idolater is one who blindly or excessively adores a person or thing that has replaced God as first love.

It's important to recognize how this process of replacing God or becoming idolaters happens. God usually gets replaced because we continue to want our way and are working our own agenda and will—not God's, so we want God to meet our selfish desires and make us comfortable. Our hearts often play into our selfishness by causing us to believe that God's goodness is about making us happy and comfortable. When God doesn't meet our selfish desires, we run to idols and try to control them to get them to fulfill our selfish desires.

We have to understand that while God gives us everything we need, He won't give us everything we want. Often what we want is ultimately harmful, doesn't make us more Christ-like, and keeps us in bondage—always controlling everyone and everything to get what we want so we can be happy—God wants to set us free from all of this. He also wants the 7 longings He placed in us to be fulfilled in him—not with the world's counterfeit.

We will have to lay down our will and selfish desires and trust that what God has for us is best and exactly what we need if we want to stop being idolaters and discover God's best.

Idolaters make idols by controlling and manipulating people to “make” them become more of who they want them to be and do what they want them to do. If this works, the person becomes someone they excessively adore (an idol). If it doesn't, they become angry, frustrated, offended, etc.

Example: A child might do some extra chores around the house and be extra nice and cooperative toward his or her parent because there is an activity the child wants to participate in that requires the parent's permission, and the parent would normally not give permission.

The child is “making an idol” of the parent because he or she is attempting to manipulate the parent into making a decision contrary to the parent's desires.

3. Worship involves recognizing that God supplies all our needs, and idolatry is looking to something other than God to meet our needs. So idolatry is worshipping something other than God to supply self-centered desires and comfort.

Idolatry grieves God because we are actually worshipping ourselves and not Him.

If we are looking to someone or something other than God to meet our needs, we are looking for self-gratification rather than satisfaction in God according to His will for us. Since only God can satisfy us, we will not experience His abundant fulfillment.

4. I use the positive carving tool of flattery to get people to like me so they will do what I want. I also use the negative carving tool of making people feel guilty if they don't do what I want.

I am learning to compliment people genuinely by letting God's love flow through me. I can lay down my tools as I learn to trust that God meets my needs. I am learning not to be angry if the person doesn't meet my expectation because my words no longer have strings attached.

5. Frustration, which includes feelings of anger, hurt, betrayal, resentment, unfairness, unforgiveness, etc., is a symptom of having idolatrous expectations of people and a lack of trust in God's provision. The level of frustration in our lives is a measure of how free we are from idolatry (or in bondage to idolatry). Little frustration indicates more trust in God and less expectation on people to meet our needs. If we are feeling frustrated, we need to turn to God with our frustration, laying down our expectations of people (confess idolatry and repent) and confessing our faith in God to provide. Faith in God is developed through abiding (staying in God's presence), which involves reading the word, continuous prayer, and obedience.

Chapter 5

1. When we only understand the world's kind of idolatrous love—that is, if the person does what I want them to do, then they must love me, we will likely have a similar understanding of God's love for us. We will only see God as being loving toward us when He does something for us or gives us what we want—like the job or the raise for which we prayed. Only when we begin to understand God's true love and purposes for us will our love relationship with God improve. God will begin to show you these truths as you lay down your selfish will and begin to trust God's higher purposes for your life.
2. Having a will regarding something for which we are praying means that we want a certain outcome. This means we don't really want what God wants but want God to do what we want. We will be controlling and manipulative with God. We think about all the things we've done for God and expect Him to do what we want when we want it. God can't be manipulated and won't answer those prayers. The problem is that we often don't realize we are thinking this way. Because we want a certain outcome, we can't really hear what God is saying, so we get confused, disappointed, etc. when it seems like God isn't answering our prayer. We think He doesn't love us or we haven't been good enough because we only understand the world's kind of love. Prayer is very powerful and effective when we don't have a will because we are then agreeing with God's will and it brings His will to pass here on earth.
3. Seven practices that strengthen our love relationship with God are:
 - 2) Not to love God with the world's kind of love—to get selfishly. By drawing on God for the grace to love and for our needs, we will stop being idolatrous toward others out of unmet need. Idolatry separates us from God; trusting God for provision brings us close.
 - 3) Not to carve on God to get Him to work for us. Idolatry toward God only causes us to be disappointed in Him. As we lay down our selfishness and trust God to meet our real need and satisfy the longings of our soul created by Him, we will grow in our love for Him.
 - 4) Not to lead others to carve on God. We need to recognize others will filter what we say through idolatrous mindsets. So we need to be wise in what we say regarding our relationship with God and what they can expect. We can also model lives characterized by humility, peace, joy, contentment, etc.—all the traits that would demonstrate trust in a good and loving God.
 - 5) To give ourselves to Him for His glory. When we lay down our lives, we position ourselves to partner with Him in His purposes and to receive greater revelation of His love. We are created by God to experience the greatest pleasure and satisfaction as we fulfill our destiny in Him.
 - 6) To believe God is our source of supply for all things. When we trust, we can be at peace and will recognize His grace and provision. This causes us to love Him more.
 - 7) To trust in Jesus' substitutionary death and intercessory life for our salvation. Remembering what Jesus has done and continues to do for us draws us close to God.
 - 8) To lead others to do the same. When we lead others to truth, we partner with God in His purposes. We experience joy in seeing others grow because we have been obedient. This is one of our God-created purposes, and it strengthens our relationship with God.

4. I would first pray, asking God to expose their idolatry, knowing our hearts deceive us. When I sense by the Holy Spirit that the timing is right, I would try to help them understand the difference between God's love and how people have idolatrous expectations of others and God. I would help them understand that God fully meets our needs and satisfies the deep longings of our souls that He created as we lay down our own plans and submit to His. I would help the person understand that, though the process is painful, there is grace to endure—and the outcome is being complete, clean, full, etc. I would be careful not to preach. People who are disappointed in God are deeply wounded. It is a work of God to bring understanding of His ways, not an intellectual debate that we try to win with words. God is faithful; He'll bring those people across our paths that He has equipped us to minister to effectively.

Chapter 6

1. First, they are focused on self-love due to the emptiness we have when we don't have the "love of the Father" in us. They represent the world's kind of love, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," where we want recognition for ourselves for what we think are good things we've done. They are a counterfeit of the 7 longings God places in each of us that only He can fulfill.

If we are filled with God's love and satisfied, we will no longer worry about ourselves and will only care about what God cares about.

We need to repent and seek God. Once we are filled with His love, these other desires will be replaced by a desire that our lives glorify God as a result of the love we have experienced in our relationship with God.

2. We tend to think that if we had a bigger home, had a better position at work, were a few pounds thinner, had more friends, etc., that somehow we would feel complete and the empty feeling would be gone. We can counteract this lie by "putting off" self, renouncing self-interest, and believing the truth: that we are made complete in Christ. God often helps us see the lie of these desires by withholding the things we want so that we will cry out to Him. When we confess our selfishness and seek Him, we find our satisfaction in Him without these things. That experience breaks the lie off of us. For example, we might believe that if others think we're competent in the workplace through successful projects, God will sometimes allow us to fail. If we go to God in those times, it is then that we see we are complete in Him, not in our outward successes.
3. We must lay down our selfishness while believing that God's plan is best. The challenge is waiting for God to change us through the process of dying to self and the suffering that accompanies the process. It is only as we die to self that we experience the greatness of God.

God is not immediately gratifying like our selfish desires; He is eternally satisfying to the deepest longings of our souls. The way we make it through the process of finding satisfaction in God is by the grace He gives us, which comes in many forms. We must remember and believe that what God gives us at any time is exactly what we need for His purposes and glory. If we forget and get our focus off of God and His truth, we will stumble.

4. Our purposes are to love and worship God for eternity, starting with our walk on earth. Loving God means to obey His commands. His plan is for us to partner with Him in His ultimate purposes for creation and eternity. There can be no higher purpose or ambition. We are short-sighted in our plans for ourselves. God's plans have eternity in mind, not temporal goals.

5. Self-respect holds the belief that we have something worthy of honor in ourselves. Yet the Bible says—all good gifts come from our Heavenly Father (Js. 1:17), and we can do nothing apart from Jesus (Jn. 15:5). Self-sufficiency is self idolatry since we can do nothing apart from Jesus.

We are to love God with our whole being, knowing that everything comes from Him. Our entire focus and identity needs to be in God. When we come to that perspective, all “self” things become a non-issue. Jesus had no “self” perspectives; He came only to serve His Father.

Chapter 7

1. Examples of people performing for God are those who are always busy doing something to serve—teaching classes, helping with cleaning, always volunteering. They are usually so busy that they don’t have time to pray.

Performing Christians can be characterized by harried attitudes, burn-out, resentment, anger, bitterness, a lack of grace toward those who are “lazy,” no peace or joy, etc.

The root wrong belief is that it is their performance that makes them acceptable to God, not our righteousness in Christ. They often are not consciously aware of this wrong belief.

2. They are trying to make themselves acceptable to God.

They either don’t understand or don’t believe that they can “do nothing apart from Christ.” They also believe it is their works that please God when it is our relationship with Him that is pleasing, and it is our position in Christ that makes us righteous.

They are like the Pharisees because they struggle with self-righteousness and pride. They are often people with many natural talents, and it is hard for them to accept that there is nothing they can do to make themselves worthy of God’s acceptance.

3. Performing for God is the sin of idolatry of self. It is a wrong belief that somehow we can accomplish things and receive God’s approval. The truth is that all supply comes from God.

Christians can be freed from the performance approach to seeking God’s approval by knowing what the truth is and believing it:

1. It is not our performance that pleases God. It’s our relationship with Him.
2. We are “approved” by God because of our acceptance of Jesus’ sacrifice for us.
3. All of our needs and supply come from God, not ourselves.

Once they understand the truth, they need to repent of making themselves an idol and begin to seek God for supply with humility and thankfulness, letting go of self-imposed pressure.

4. I would minister to a Christian struggling with performing for God by helping that person to understand God’s grace and His love. Many times performing Christians have learned to seek approval by performing, and they carry this belief into their relationship with God. They’ve often substituted approval through performance for love in their relationships. The concept of loving and giving without expectations or keeping score is not something they understand.

We are saved by faith and made righteous because of what Christ has done for us. It is not because we are worthy or can make ourselves good enough. God loved us first. He supplies all of our needs. He brings satisfaction that performance can’t.

More than anything, performing Christians desire the contentment, peace, and joy that result when we stop striving and start trusting. They struggle with ongoing stress and anxiety. We can help them take down the wrong mindsets and be set free.

5. This chart contrasts right and wrong beliefs regarding how our needs are met. Christians who tend to perform for God often hold to some of the wrong beliefs about our supply. Freedom from performing begins with changing what we believe. Faith comes by hearing, so declaring what we know to be true in God's word will begin to change our behavior as we begin to change what we believe.

Chapter 8

1. Mom doesn't have the same desires for us that we do (our comfort and happiness), and we learn that we can't control her, so we turn to ourselves to supply our happiness. As we get older, what makes us happy has much to do with what people think of us (pride of life and lust of the eyes) and immediate gratification (lust of the flesh and eyes). When self is an idol (we're looking to ourselves for happiness), we perform for approval from people and look to control our environment to satisfy our lusts.
2. When others become idols, there are selfish desires we're trying to meet by pleasing them so they will please us. We misunderstand God's "goodness" to mean making us happy and comfortable, so we carve on God to get Him to please us. When this doesn't work, we become disillusioned.
3. (a) Women often idolize their children. They positively and negatively carve on them to be good, successful, etc. While wanting these things for their children isn't wrong—training children in Christ-like character and helping them achieve their destinies in Christ is a parent's responsibility. However, there is often a problem with a mother's motive that makes it idolatrous. Self is an idol when mothers use the successes of their children to feel proud or better about themselves. (b) For men, careers often become an idol. Doing excellent work is God's standard, but the motive can be idolatrous if success leads to pride and work becomes the place where we seek the approval of men for performance rather than God's approval of our Christ-like character.
4. We can release people from our expectations, ask their forgiveness, repent, and return to worshipping God.

We will no longer be frustrated because we will be looking to God as our supplier, not to people.

Our relationships will be full of peace and freedom because ungodly expectations will be gone. They will also be characterized by giving and serving (love), not by carving to get.

Chapter 9

1. When things are going well, we can sometimes be blind to sin. In particular, sins of the heart are hard for us to see. Our hearts are deceptive (Jer. 17:9-10), and we tend to rationalize rather than face head-on the ugliness of our hearts and repent. When God "gives us over to sin," He removes all protection from sin in that area of our lives.

Equipped to Love Study Guide

This can mean removing our fear of God by getting us focused on the object of our idolatry, where we begin to compromise and rationalize our thoughts and actions. It can also mean removing the barriers that were preventing us from acting the sin out. The sin then moves from our heart to being acted out in our lives. The consequences of sin then manifest in the natural, and the sin is no longer hidden. This causes us to have to deal with the painful mess we've created. When we feel the pain and suffer for the sin, this discomfort gets our attention, making us aware of sin. God's heart is that this awareness will lead us to repentance.

An example involving idolatry might be that you have not developed your relationship with God and experienced His acceptance of you and His love. Say you're attractive and have learned to get attention from the opposite sex, and someone at work has noticed you.

If you're not responding to God's many warnings in your heart, God may begin to "give you over to sin." The two of you may begin to escalate your flirting with extended meetings, lunch together, etc. You rationalize that you're not doing anything wrong. Finally, one thing leads to another, and now you have both committed adultery, first in your hearts, then in your bodies. If this doesn't wake you up, you may eventually get caught. God will continue to allow both the sin and the exposure of it to escalate to bring you to repentance.

As you think back, you may realize that God had been trying to get your attention long before so many lives were hurt. Of course, the root sin you needed to repent of in the beginning was that of seeking approval and acceptance from men instead of finding your supply in God alone. You need to repent of this sin, or history will repeat itself in another circumstance.

If you've experienced a painful lesson like this, know that God is merciful and will provide grace to heal as you repent and follow His lead. Learn to avoid being given over to sin by responding early to the prompting of the Spirit in your heart. Knowing our hearts are deceptive, like David, we can ask God to "search our heart and see if there is any wicked way" in us daily.

2. We tend to find ways to avoid the pain by avoiding the relationship God is using to train us. We may also try to carve to get the relationship to be the way we want it. Sometimes we grow bitter and shut down emotionally.

Recognizing God's training was discussed in this week's Faith Step. Generally, God is training us whenever we experience pain, disappointment, discomfort, etc., that is not a result of sin. Even sin, when we repent, is used by God to train us. In short, God is training us all the time. The key is to recognize this and learn to stop trying to avoid the discomfort and allow the growth God intends.

3. (a) Blaming the incident on satan and believing God would never allow something bad to happen. (b) Recognizing God's sovereignty and that He controls and ordains all things; having an attitude of humility, realizing that every breath we take is under His control; and having an attitude of submission to God's plans, allowing God to be glorified.
4. Their lives will eventually be hit with difficult circumstances allowed by God to train them. Since they wrongly believe that God's goodness is about their comfort and happiness, they will reject His training, not understanding its purpose or believing in the fruit of peace it will yield. Although they believe they are in God's will, in reality, they are not submitted to God or His purposes in their lives.

Chapter 10

1. The false gospel is taking the truths of the Bible and God and soft-pedaling, twisting, and even omitting them to create an image of a God who serves us rather than the other way around. We've turned God into our own personal "Santa Claus." There are potentially a few reasons why this man-centered gospel has emerged:
 - Fear of man on the part of leaders who rely on attendees' for support.
 - Leaders seeking acceptance/approval (idolatry) from attendees with feel-good messages.
 - Leaders' unbelief in God's capacity to draw people to himself with the full truth.
 - Idolatry in the hearts of people who attend church.

Example: 2 Tim. 3:2-5 (people are lovers of themselves, not God, and have a form of godliness but deny its power). Many warnings against false teachers in the New Testament relate back to idolatry. In Ps. 115:3, God "does whatever pleases him."

We need to address the idolatry among leaders and people who go to church.

2. (a) Idolater: God is going to make me happy and comfortable.

The truth: God's plan is to form me into His Image for His purposes and His glory; the process is painful, but I will enjoy fellowship with Him now and for eternity.

(b) Idolater: God is going to make life more fun and pleasurable.

The truth: Coming to Jesus means laying down my life to worship and serve Him only. I will experience lasting joy, peace, and fellowship with God, not a short-term high.

(c) Idolater: God is going to make me happy and comfortable—and important!

The truth: God promises to provide what we need according to His will and purposes for our lives—with grace to bear the trials and suffering in order to perfect our faith and character.

(d) Idolater: God needs me.

The truth: We are unique creations, each with individual ways of relating to God, which is precious to God; however, God does not need us to be complete.

3. Satan, darkness, the wicked, and suffering.
4. Martyrdom, persecution, and suffering.
5. By first exposing sin and selfishness.
7. We need to recognize we are born idolaters and lovers of ourselves, focused on our comfort, happiness, and selfish desires. This makes our definition of goodness, love, etc. radically different than God's. As a consequence, until God starts to change us, we naturally hate God, not understanding His ways and purposes. When we initially seek God with our idolatrous motives (to get), we tend to develop a love/hate relationship with Him. This type of relationship is characterized by "bondage to the law, pride of man, intolerance, aggressiveness, deceit, hypocrisy, all the deeds of the flesh, confusion, despair, devastation or defection, and *no peace*."

To love God, we must first lay down our plans for ourselves and, though His ways are often painful, never lose sight of the fact that He is re-establishing our rule with Him over creation as His beloved family and joint heirs with Jesus.

Chapter 11

1. Many people come to God with idolatrous hearts and have not identified with being sinners needing to repent and be cleansed. They are looking at what they want from God rather than coming to God because they recognize the depth of their sin and realize their need for God to cleanse them. We often move people too quickly to confession and professing their faith in Jesus without allowing them to experience true repentance, including contrition. The root problem is a lack of repentance and, therefore, a desire for God that is idolatrous in nature. People in this position can study the truth in the Bible and believe God will use that truth to work true repentance. When we realize how much God has forgiven, we will be deeply humble and full of love for a God who would have such mercy on us.
2. The distinction that made Jesus' disciples so radically on-fire for God was a deep revelation of their sin and corresponding depth of repentance similar to that of Mary of Bethany (Luke 7:40-47). The closer we are to God, the more we are aware of the depth of our sin. Jesus' disciples spent 3 years in the presence of God, so they couldn't help but realize their own sinfulness. They realized they had been forgiven much and so loved much. They were compelled by this love to radically change their world, despite realizing their decisions to follow Jesus would lead to martyrdom for most of them.
3. Christians today not only can, but must, have a burning love for God. It will be essential for the Church to fully return to her first love before Jesus returns. We will experience this kind of love as we experience deeper repentance similar to Mary of Bethany (Luke 7:40-47).
4. I would spend more time in helping the person understand sin by going through key Scriptures as led. I would pray specifically asking God to expose sin, knowing our hearts are deceptive. I would resist the temptation to rush them through to a profession of faith in Christ and trust God's sovereignty regarding timing for the person to receive salvation.

Chapter 12

1. It means exemplifying His character in our lives. We put on Jesus by spending time in His presence, choosing to take on His character. We "eat the word," and the Holy Spirit teaches and trains us. We submit to God's training and draw on Him to give us the grace to grow in His Image. We can put on Jesus' character because we are not in need ourselves. So we can be kind and compassionate in our relationships because our motive is no longer to get.

Before we can put on the new self, we have to put off the old. As God exposes old-self idolatry, we go through the process of repentance.

We can tell when someone has the new self on by the person's behavior and attitude. The individual will demonstrate a love toward others that is giving and serving. The person will have peace when others are anxious and stressed and will be known for having trust and faith in God instead of frustration, anger, resentment, and bitterness during difficult circumstances.

2. When we put on the new self, we are gracious toward others, walk in supernatural peace in the midst of life's storms, and can see God's goodness and love (thankful hearts) in all things. Others are stressed, fearful, frustrated, disillusioned, and disappointed because they still have the world's idolatrous perspective.

3. When we have Jesus' character, people are drawn to us. They want to know how we can be peaceful, full of faith and trust, and thankful in difficult circumstances. We're significantly different in attitude, perspective, and behavior from most everyone they know, and they want to know why. We are giving to them without expectations, and they begin to experience God's love as it flows through us. This opens the door for evangelism.

4. 5 concepts that will free us to love for the glory of God are:

Distinguishing between the world's kind of love and God's. When we recognize the world's selfish love in us, it will motivate us to draw on God so we can love by giving and serving.

Understanding that love and idolatry are mutually exclusive. If we see signs of selfishness in us, we can know that in those areas we do not have God's love in us. God's love is always giving. The world's love is always selfish.

Discerning the characteristics of idolatry. We must recognize idolatry before we can repent and draw on God's love.

Receiving repentance for the sin of idolatry. Once we recognize idolatry, we can walk through the steps of repentance to be freed to love with God's love.

Looking to God through Jesus Christ for the ability to love. We must remember that we have no capacity to love without God's love in us flowing out to others.

Chapter 13

1. We need to be free of idolatry (the old self).

This can only happen when we completely trust God for our needs and our focus is to love and worship God only. In His presence we begin to take on His character and compassion. Then we will love the way He loves.

2. What moves God to respond is the desire to show compassion through His Son.

The Father's motive is to glorify Himself in His Son as He works in us. As we spend time in God's presence, He begins to reveal what's on His heart. This leads us to have His compassion, and our prayers and service begin to align with His will. Then we become effective.

3. When God's love has flowed through us to another undeserving soul, we can know that God's love is perfected in us. True ministry is a sacrifice. We give with God's compassion in our hearts to bring Him glory, not to draw attention to ourselves.

4. Three concepts to remember about how God's love flows through us:

We are loved by God when He loves through us. When God's love flows out of us, it is accompanied by His power, and lives are changed. We see the fruit and know His love has been perfected in us. As we allow His love to flow to others, He reveals more of His love to us.

Our motive is that God be glorified in the Son. If our motive for ministry is selfish, God won't be in it. We will not have His anointing, and there will be no fruit. If, on the other hand, our motive is to glorify God, He will empower us to that end.

Jesus works in us as we abide in Him through prayer, His Word, and obeying out of love for Jesus. If we want to see God work in our lives, we need to position ourselves so He can use us.