

food for thought >>>

"Love is the doorway through
which the human soul passes from
selfishness to service".
~ Jack Hyles



Proverbs 27:17 As Iron Sharpens Iron, So One Person Sharpens Another

The Growth Journal



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Happy Valentine's Day!

Valentine's Day is traditionally a day for love and lovers. Being incarcerated can put a huge strain on that concept, seeing how you are not able to enjoy the day in a customary way. But even behind bars, you can make the best of the day. Here are some ideas:

1. If you have a significant other outside of those walls, you can let them know how much you love them. That is what the day is really about; a day set aside to show your love. Be extra kind to them on this day.
2. Make your loved ones feel special by making the conversations you have with them more about them than about you all the time. Ask how their day is going, how are things at work, what's going on around the house. People like to feel like they are important.
3. Give your loved one, or even your kids, the best Valentine's Day gift of all. That would be "A Better You". Be kinder. Try being more patient and not get irritated at them. Don't snap at them if things don't go your way.
4. Do what you can to keep them from feeling like they are doing time with you. Don't make their lives any harder than it already is. If you have a spouse, fiancé, girl/boyfriend, or even kids, and they are still communicating with you behind bars, then you are blessed. You should be grateful for that. Let them know how much you appreciate them.
5. Take good care of yourself so that when you can be with them again you will have a good quality of life with them. Try to eat as best you can and exercise. Keep your mind sharp by reading, learning, and getting plenty of rest.
6. Even if you don't have a significant other, there is someone that cares about you. You are loved by Growth Ministries, but more importantly Jesus.

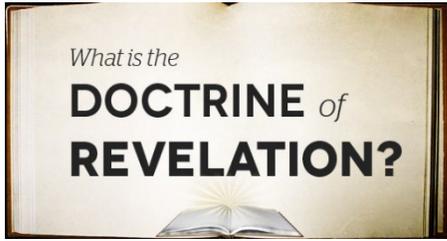
AND LET US NOT GROW
WEARY OF DOING GOOD, FOR
IN DUE SEASON WE WILL REAP,
IF WE DO NOT GIVE UP.

- GALATIANS 6:9

 Bible Study Tools

The Doctrine of Revelation

by Alywin Mitchell



The God of the Bible is the one who reveals Himself to his creation. God creating man with mental and spiritual faculties indicates His intention that man knows Him. But when man fell in the garden of Eden, these abilities were essentially reduced, and we cannot ourselves discover God. We can only personally know God through a personal relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

First, we need to know what revelation means. It is the Greek word “Apokalupsis” which simply means “an uncovering, to uncover or unveil”. Theology tells us that revelation refers to God unveiling Himself to man; communicating truth to the mind of man, because he cannot discover it any other way.

Because man is a created but fallen being, shows the need for a revelation of God. Unless God reveals Himself, mankind can't know or discover God.

Since God is so amazing, His divine revelation can be instantaneous or progressive. These can be in two categories, general and special.

General Revelation

General revelation is when God reveals himself to all mankind. Such as God in Nature. All creation indicates that there is a creator. The God of creation is the creator, designer, architect, and sustainer of all that exists. Genesis 1:1, “*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*” But the revelation of God is not enough on its own, because it cannot be personally known through it. Creation tells us that there is a God, but it does not bring us in contact with Him. Unfortunately, most people have decided that created things, even the things that they manufacture with their own hands, are sometimes exalted as gods. In Romans 1: 25 Paul says “*who exchanged the truth of God for the lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*”

Then there is the revelation of conscience. Conscience has been defined as “knowing oneself”. Knowing right from wrong with a determination to do what is right. Even though the existence of conscience shows that there is a lawgiver, it does not give personal knowledge of Him. Having a conscience is meant to be an internal witness of God, nevertheless that witness is imperfect because we are corrupted by sin.

Next, there is the revelation of God in history. Here we just have to look at the rise and fall of mighty nations of the world. It simply shows us that somewhere behind the scenes there is a sovereign hand, guiding, governing, raising, and bringing down rulers and governments of nations. God has always been involved in human history.

The Doctrine of Revelation (cont.)

Special Revelation

Special revelation is the things God does where he reveals Himself to specific people.

God Reveals Himself through Miracles

A miracle is a supernatural intervention in the laws of nature such as the plagues of Egypt (Exodus 4-12), the parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 14-15), the manna from heaven and the water from the rock (Exodus 16-17). The four Gospels and the Book of Acts are full of God intervening into the laws of nature: miracles!

God Reveals Himself through Prophecy

There are two types of prophecy: Preaching and Prediction. Prophetic preaching is God-summoned speech with God-inspired intentionality that challenges the church. It offers hope and encouragement in light of God's passion for justice, and it gives courage and encourages the church to change the social order.

Prediction prophecy is **the foreknowledge of future events**. Prophesying is speaking something that the Spirit spontaneously brings to mind. Both are inspired and reveal the Word of God.

God Reveals Himself in Christ Jesus

Even though God reveals Himself in nature, conscience, history, and prophecy, they are insufficient to reveal God's person. There still exists a need for a much more personal revelation of God. This kind of revelation can only be met in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ is the total revelation of God including God's will, His person, His nature, and His character. All you have to do is look to the Lord Jesus Christ, which is looking at God in human form.

God Reveals Himself through Scripture

The revelation of God in Jesus Christ is the revelation of God in the Living Word. John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:14, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth".

And lastly...God reveals Himself through personal experience. WE are so blessed, because the fact that God chose to reveal Himself at all, shows us that He wanted us to know His will, His nature, His person, and His character. We have abundant testimony of the revelation of God in personal experience.



Many times, when people think about love, they think about the tingly feeling of meeting someone, kissing for the first time or the way their heartrate increases when they are around someone of interest in the beginning of a relationship. While those feelings are amazing when they first start, they don't last forever. When the newness wears off, and the person exhibits behaviors that are less than desirable, we really start to figure out where the person stands in our life and if they are a good fit or not.

Love is often expressed in two main ways; verbal – speaking love and kindness to others in the words chosen during conversations or when speaking about someone to others; and actions – doing something thoughtful without a hidden agenda or expectation of something in return.

Earthly love pales in comparison to God's Love.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 – “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres”. The good thing about GOD is, no matter how bad someone behaves, there is always a chance at redemption and forgiveness.

1 John 4:16 – “And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them”. As Christians, we should consider living our lives showing love and grace to others. Even when we have a bad day and our patience are wearing thin, we should step back and bite our tongues when others don't live up to our expectation. By not expressing anger or impatience, we are in essence, extending love. We have no idea what kind of day the other person is having or why they act the way they do. It is not up to us to judge them for their behaviors.

Psalms 143:8 – “Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life.” God's love for us is unfailing. That means he will always love us. He wants us to have a relationship with him. The more we converse and trust him with our “stuff” the more he will show us love through events that happen around or to us. We must trust in him and his ability to show his love. We must also recognize and appreciate the love we receive when it is given.

Knowing God loves us is an important part of our journey in becoming the person he wants us to be. We are called to be Jesus-like and show love to others like the examples provided in the bible. If we build walls and don't show others love, we will be missing out on a lifetime of love coming back to us. God works all things for our good, especially love.

God Bless you all.

Unfathomable Love

by Bev Brown

I wrote this several years ago while on a ship. I was struck that there is no way we can possibly grasp the entirety of God's love. I hope as you read this you will be blessed by just a small glimpse of the love God has for you.

Unfathomable Love

I look out my window and see nothing but water.
The vastness of the sea makes me diminish in my own eyes.
Clouds billowing in the sky, gentle movement of the waves.
But other than that – nothing.

As I ponder the immeasurable depth of the sea
I am reminded of God's love which is unfathomable.
Such are His grace, mercy, and goodness toward me.
If they all were to be cast into the ocean,
There would not be room enough to receive them.

**In my mind I am small – insignificant – yet He views me
As beloved, chosen, worth giving His all for.
Not because of any goodness in me or greatness I have done
But because of who He is – His innate being.**

**I wonder at His works which are too marvelous
For me to comprehend. If I could then He would not
Be the One true and living God, the Maker of all things.
In this I rejoice!**

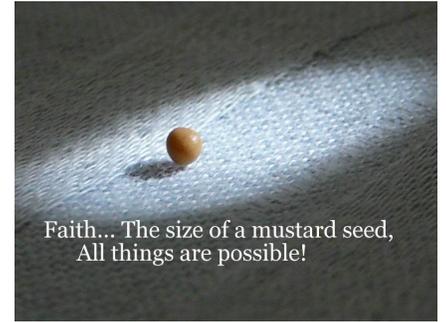
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Faith of a Mustard Seed & The Power of God's Love

by Arron Long



I was going to wait until after I had a business meeting Friday to write an article. I wanted to hear a “Yes” from a potential client my company is testing with right now to become a potential vendor for them. This deal will literally catapult myself from being a convicted felon, walking out of Wyandotte County jail on October 28th of 2019, to being a co-owner to a million-dollar business on January 21st of 2022. Though the meeting didn’t happen due to data issues and was re-scheduled to this Friday, I felt a powerful message from God asking me “Why are you not writing the article before the meeting? Why do you need to hear the “Yes” to vessel for me?”. I wasn’t in trouble when I got this message, however I was simply reminded that my faith has already catapulted me far beyond a million-dollar business. My business successes are small tools God is giving to me to use for HIM! God wants me to write about my success as a born-again Christian who just a few years ago was in the same whirlwind that you, brothers and sisters, are in right now. The whirlwind of “There’s no way out!”, “No one loves me”, “I was wronged so that’s why my life is this way”, “My Mom/Dad didn’t raise me normal; I hate them because if I had different parents I wouldn’t be here”



I have felt all those feelings and thoughts from the time I was 15 until I was 30.; fifteen years of numbing my feelings with marijuana, heavy drinking, prescription pain meds, heroin, meth, and anything else I could touch. It was a vicious cycle of self-loathing, self-doubting, self-hating. You hate your situation, so you continue to hate, blame, and curse others for the wrongdoing that you do to yourself and to others. (Now I know this is an article meant for love and I promise we will tie it together.) During these 15 years I was a non-believer because how can a God who loves all do me so wrong, right? How can he create me and send a son to die for me, but here I am locked up, here I am with stab wound scars, bullet flesh wound scars, organ damage, mental scars, etc. But trust Him today! Satan has come to steal, kill, and destroy! Christ has come that you might have abundant life! (Jn 10:10)

I was in my second week of lock-up in Wyandotte County jail. I was feeling anxious, depressed, and it wasn’t the situation of being locked up that was causing this, because I was facing a level 9 felony. I knew my situation was not anything compared to my previous legal battles. I finally heard a prison ministry volunteer one day in my cell and he was going over one of Jesus’s teachings (Matthew Ch.6 Vs 25-34) and all of a sudden, my world changed. I opened the Bible and read Matthew. I got through Chapter 7 and I fell to my knees, surrendered my life, surrendered my past and future, surrendered my hate, and asked for love and redemption. I asked this without asking for anything else in return. I asked this with knowing my road to reach a sustainable life in society would be full of adversity and setbacks. I was ready though instantly after that prayer because all I wanted was God’s love and the blood of Christ to wash over me. I was then filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit, and I haven’t looked back since.

Faith of a Mustard Seed & The Power of God's Love (cont.)

God's love will take you from rock bottom to a foundation on solid rock. You have to seek him first. You have to open your ears fully and truly to hearing him speak, open your eyes to see his signs, open your heart to forgive and be vulnerable to going through your closet and cleaning the mess from other's wrongdoings in your past. The Holy Spirit will burn all of that away and set you free if you truly seek God every second of everyday from now until our human demise.

I write this to tell you that you are loved. I write this to tell you that no matter what things you have done, who you've hurt, damage you inflicted on yourself, **GOD LOVES YOU!!** He wants you to be found. He wants you to seek him. You see it wasn't until I sought God that God gave me blessings. I have the understanding though, that these blessings are his to give me for me to do his work for the rest of my life. I am his servant. I love him but will never love him as much as he loves us. My brothers and sisters, a mustard seed of faith can take you from 15 years of crime and addiction, incarceration, being wounded, to being in a position of tremendous success, having your own family, surrounding yourself with corporate executives and an Ex-NBA player investor for your own business. God's Love is the only thing that can do this miracle. My walk is a miracle, but it's because I sought God's love. I died twice and was revived, I spent 5 years incarcerated, I inflicted damage and emotional pain on people, yet God is giving me blessings in a miraculous way in less than three years because there is nothing stronger than **GOD'S LOVE FOR YOU!**



I want to finish with this. Open your bible and read every day. Pray to God to help you find him. Forgive others and forgive yourself. Ask God to pour the Holy Spirit into you to burn the old you away and be born again a new person, with a new purpose that is to always walk with God and accept his love and blessings. I will pray all who reads this finds that love, that beautiful feeling of letting the weight of all the negative and sinful things go and walk into the light. I will pray for your souls because no matter your situation, God will make your life a success in his time and his way. I love you all and God Bless!

Philippians 4 12-13 – I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me.

VALENTINE'S DAY WORD SEARCH



A V U A N G C A N D Y Q E I Y N J E T F
 J R R Z A O C G C S G C B O U Z P A W Y
 T D Y Q C B P M K O J S R U T Q W O P D
 I B D Y D G W A B S R I T L X M P V Z R
 H O V O O N E A H E T G O U H A B L W B
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 M E S C S B A O O I F Z H S T Q M T L T
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 A N I L I E O S N H V D H R D A H U B Z
 R P W N S S H E A R T S L G B Z N D G M
 D L O W S E C T R G C D I P U C F L V S
 R N P P O Q N W E O T N G A W E C J C F
 J O E F W R W I D R E C I T B C X A M Q
 E R M U T M R N T F Y H R R Z S A F A L E
 R S B V N N R A K N I P U G U L F K Q E
 J S B K O H B W H Z E A R O Y U Y W J K
 O C U D D L E D U X R L C C R E V N O X
 B O W E W R R N G Y K R A O Z N V G H V
 D Y D Z C U O Y E V O L I V H I U W D G
 N G O K Q T V Z L V S K M N S M Y V D S
 L U N T L W L P B Q P J S B W E Z J W E
 T K F S D N E I R F E K Q X S B X V L V
 A Q U H S X L I C S A B E R Y H C G O U

Valentine	Cupid	Be Mine	Pink
Candy	Cuddle	Hearts	Red
Chocolate	Hug	Card	Roses
February	Kiss	Love	I Love You
Flowers	Love	Arrow	Sweet
Friend			



Words to Grow By

Agape Love

Agape Love is unconditional love.
Unconditional love never punishes or hurts us.
Rather, it gently corrects and teaches.
It continues to love us even when we become unlovable.
That's how God loves every single one of us
And there is absolutely nothing that can separate us from His love.
It doesn't matter who you are or what you've done,
God still loves you and it's made very clear in *Romans 8:38-39. NLT*;
And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow, not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below, indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Trust and believe,
God loves YOU with Agape Love.

Women Empowering Women

Love Yourself Enough

You must learn to love yourself enough to take the actions
required for your happiness,
Enough to cut yourself loose from the drama filled past,
Enough to set a high standard for relationships,
Enough to feed your mind and body in a healthy manner,
Enough to forgive yourself,
Enough to move on.
And never forget that God loves you more than enough.
God loves each of us as though there were only one of us.
John 3:16

If You Want Help from God...Ask God

by Mike Orzechowski



Why do we sometimes struggle with our prayers to ask for God's help? We were given instruction directly from Jesus when he taught us how to pray as documented in Matthew 6:5-15, and for about 2000 years it continues to be a winning formula for a prayer in asking for help from God. In Genesis 2 we see an ideal relationship between God and man as Adam had conversations directly with God. God gave Adam dominion over the earth and all the creatures. We were made in God's image and had free will to exercise that dominion over all of earth. However, Adam's moral compass was with God. Adam relied on God for everything and fully trusted God's guidance and authority. When Adam needed help, he just asked God directly. In Genesis 3, everything changed as the tempter offered Eve the fruit of the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil, so they could be like God. Once Adam took that bite in full defiance of God's command, he essentially put a barrier between humanity and God.

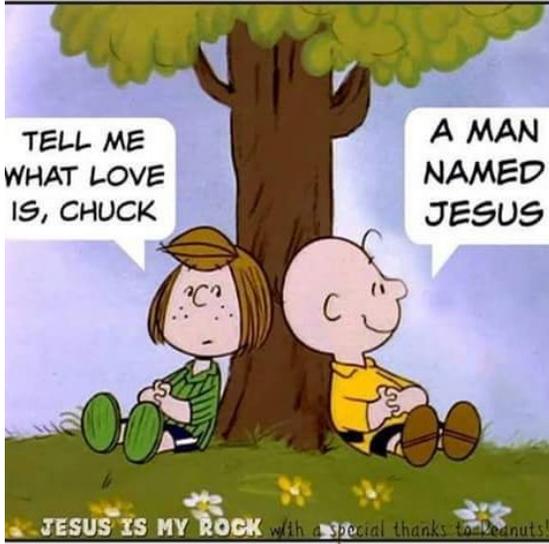
God still recognizes our dominion over the earth where we have free will to exercise our authority. When we want to ask God for help, we should invite him back into our authority. God wants to help us, but he does not want you to make it a public announcement that makes the appearance that God is part of our authority and helping us at our command. It is ok to openly pray in public as a corporate prayer, but we should do it humbly. In Matthew 6:5-8 (NIV), (⁵ *And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.* ⁶ *But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.* ⁷ *And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.* ⁸ *Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*).

In Matthew 6:9-13 Jesus gives us a foundation to base our prayer. It starts out recognizing God's authority over us and inviting God to help us in the authority he put in our hands, Matthew 6:9-10 (NIV) (⁹ *This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven'*).

The next part, we ask God to help us with what we truly need and not what we think we need or things we desire but do not really need, Matthew 6:11 (NIV), (¹¹ *Give us today our daily bread.*). Then, depending on the translation of debts or sins, we ask that God forgive us of our sins or what we owe him, as we do the same to everyone else, Matthew 6:12 (NIV), (¹² *And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*). Then finally, we recognize we are human, given true free will and just like Adam, we need God's guidance and help, Matthew 6:13 (NIV), (¹³ *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*).

Jesus taught us how to pray and ask for God's help and God revealed to us in Genesis 2 that we can have a regular conversation with God and share with him our lives. In Matthew 6:8, he knows what we need, he just wants us to invite him into our authority so he can help us. So, if you are struggling and needing God's help, just pray.

Just for Laughs



What did one piece of toast say to the other?

"You're my butter half!"

What did one light bulb say to the other on Valentine's Day?

"I love you a whole watt."

Do skunks celebrate Valentine's Day?

Sure, they're very scent-imental!

What did the stamp say to the envelope on Valentine's Day?

"I'm stuck on you!"

What do farmers give for Valentine's Day?

Lots of hogs and kisses.

What did one flame say to the other on Valentine's Day?

"We're a perfect match!"



Valentine's Day Dream

One morning Emma woke up and was startled. Her husband Jim asked what was the matter. She told him, "I just had a dream that you gave me a pearl necklace for Valentine's Day. What do you think it means?"

"You'll know tonight", Jim said.

That evening, Jim came home with a small package and gave it to his wife. Delighted, Emma opened it - only to find a book entitled "The Meaning of Dreams".

What do Lawyers do for Valentine's Day?

Mike walked into a post office just before Valentine's Day. He couldn't help noticing a middle-aged, balding man standing in a corner sticking "Love" stamps on bright pink envelopes with hearts all over them. Then the man got out a bottle of Chanel perfume from his pocket and started spraying scent over the envelopes.

By now Mike's curiosity had gotten the better of him, and so he asked the man why he was sending all those cards. The man replied, "I'm sending out 500 Valentine cards signed, 'Guess who?'"

"But why?" asked Mike.

"I'm a divorce lawyer," the man replied.

closing words...

How Well Do You Know God?

*Jeremiah 9:23-24 ESV 23 Thus says the Lord: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, 24 but let him who boasts boast in this, **that he understands and knows me**, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord.”*



Lonnie Johnson
GMI Executive Director



How well do you know God? Many people “**know of**” God. They believe God exists. Even the demons believe in God (James 2:19). But how well do you know Him? What kind of a relationship do you have with him?

When we have a good relationship with someone, we get to know all about them. Some Christians know more about their spouse, kids, or friends than they do about the Lord.

God knows everything about us. I can hear you now, “But he is God. He knows everything”. But he actually cares to know about us. He wants to know what we want, what we need, what we are afraid of. He wants us to share those thoughts with him, you know, like people do when they are in a relationship. But more so, He wants us to know about Him. He wants to reveal himself to us. The more we know about someone, the more we can trust them. The more we know what they are capable of, the more we know their intentions toward us.

The best way to get to know Him is through prayer and reading the bible. Find out God’s nature, His character, and His many names and what they mean to us. There are so many attributes to God that He wants us to know. For instance, He is soooo forgiving and all we have to do is admit we need forgiving. 1 John 1:9.

Earlier I said that you should even get to know God’s many names. We can call Him for anything we need. When we need healing, we can call him Jehovah Rapha. When we need provisions, we can call him Jehovah Jireh. When our minds are confused, and we have too much going on we can call on Jehovah Shalom the God of Peace.

What is God to you? Is He this mystical being that you only see as a punisher if you mess up? Or is He the best friend, provider, comforter, healer, father that you have ever known?

Is He just a 911 number you only call when you get in trouble? Or is He someone you can share your troubles with?

God wants to be your friend...

John 15:15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not **know** his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.


Growth Ministries Inc. P.O. Box 4375
Olathe, KS 66063
www.growthministriesinc.org
info@growthministriesinc.org

Changing the World One Life at a Time