



[Advance: Next Level Relationships](#)
[How To Deal With Self-Centeredness](#)

If we are going to get to the next level relationally with others, we have got to deal with our spiritual disorders that are hindering us from developing next level relationships. In this sermon series, we are learning about these internal problems and learning what God says we need to do to overcome them.

These spiritual disorders are great barriers that keep us from making disciples. The main method that Jesus used to make disciples was relational. He is our chief example for what it means to be relational. Our internal spiritual disorders affect the way we relate to other people. They keep us from doing our part to connect to others the way Jesus connected to others.

[These internal spiritual disorders could be called relational B.O.](#)

The first two internal spiritual disorders that we learned about that hinder us from getting to the next level in relationships were...

[Self-Condensation and Self-Righteousness](#)

The next internal spiritual disorder that I want to learn about that hinders us from getting to the next level in relationships is...

[Self-Centeredness](#)

[To be self-centered means to be preoccupied with oneself and one's affairs. Synonyms of self-centered include egocentric, egotistic, egotistical, self-absorbed, self-obsessed, self-seeking, or self-serving.](#)

Jesus frequently encouraged his disciples to avoid being self-centered.

He said to them deny yourself.

He told them when they were being self-centered.

He shared parables with them about being a servant to others rather than being self-centered.

He pointed out people that were self-centered and said don't be like them. He pointed out people that were not self-centered and said be like them.

He said to them if you save your life, you will lose it, but if you lose your life for my sake, you will find it.

He said the first will be last and the last will be first.

He modeled for them a life style that was the opposite of a self-centered life style and called them to follow Him.

The problem is that when we are born, we are all obsessively self-centered.

Genesis 8:21

21 And the Lord smelled a soothing aroma. Then the Lord said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth;

NKJV

Psalms 51:5

5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin my mother conceived me.

NKJV

Eccl. 7:20

20 For there is not a just man on earth who does good
And does not sin.

NKJV

We are not self-aware or cognitive of our self-centered condition but everyone else is. We cry when we are hungry. We cry when we are dirty. We cry when we are in pain. We cry when we are sleepy. We cry when we feel insecure. We cry when we do not get our way.

The people around us cater to our self-centered attitude and behavior. We throw a fit and they excuse us by saying we are sleepy, dirty, or hungry. They hold us, they pacify us with a pacifier, they check our diaper, they put down for a nap, they feed us, they play with us. They do everything they can to satisfy us and make us happy.

If we have responsible parents, at some point they will begin to challenge our self-centered condition and ambitions.

They will begin to train us that we are not the center of the universe. They will train us that there are things that are more important in life than our own personal pleasure. They will begin to teach us that getting what we want is not always safe for us. They will begin to teach us that getting what we want is not always best for others and that we need to have a regard for others. They will teach us that throwing a fit when we are disappointed is not acceptable. If we are a strong willed child we will fight this tooth and nail and wear our parents thin.

Just because we are trained by our parents or by society to deny our self does not mean that we stop being self-centered!

We remain self-centered but we change our behavior to avoid painful consequences.

Child discipline is just using a child's self-centered motivation to modify their behavior.

One of the main goals of parenting should be to use the law to restrain a child until a child becomes self-governed by love.

To be self-governed by love means that we restrain our self because of the affection we have for others.

The problem with this kind of love is that feelings of affection can change. Feelings of affection are whimsical. They are inconstant. These feelings can change with each new circumstance.

What compounds the problem with this kind of love is that many parents are not experts at nurturing these feelings of affection in their children. Siblings can also be rather challenged at cultivating feelings of affection in their siblings.

For there to be a lasting change in the way we govern our self-centered nature we must be governed by a kind of love that is superior to feelings of affection!

That kind of love is called God's love in the bible.

1 John 4:16

16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

NKJV

John 13:34

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

NKJV

Paul described what God's love looks like in 1 Corinthians 13.

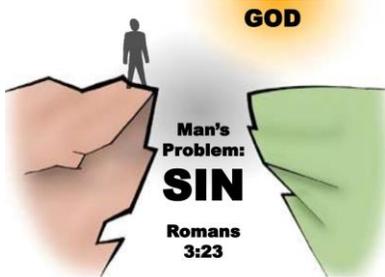
God's love is a sacrificial, charitable, and benevolent love. It motivates us to willfully sacrifice ourselves to serve the well-being of others, despite how we feel. God's love motivates us to put off being self-centered and to use our time, our abilities, our talents, and our money to be a blessing to others.

How do we experience God's love?



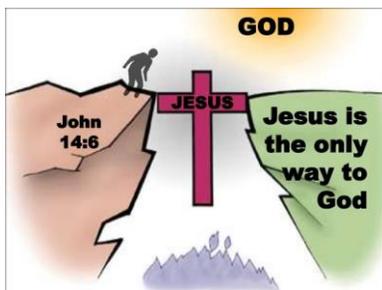
Our problem with loving like God loves is we are fallen creatures that are not capable of manufacturing God's love. Being fallen means we fall short of what God originally intended for mankind. One of the ways we fall short is that we cannot love like God loves.

Being fallen creatures also means we are dead to God spiritually.

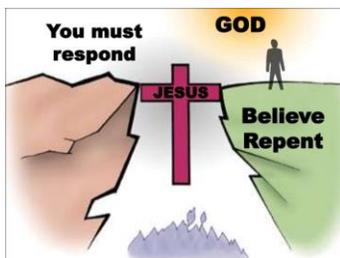


This means we are cut off from the life of God. We are separated from God.

God cannot manufacture His love in us if we are dead to Him spiritually.



Jesus is the Son of God who became the son of man. As the son of man, He was the embodiment of the love of God. He demonstrated the love of God for us through His incarnation and what He sacrificed for us in His incarnation. His payment for our sins on the cross was His greatest sacrifice.



By receiving Jesus and His Spirit, we become alive to God spiritually. Jesus called this transformation a new birth.

John 3:5-6

5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

NKJV

If we are born of God's Spirit, God can then manufacture His love in us. We can grow in the love of God.

Only Jesus can manufacture God's love in you.



If we receive Jesus, His Spirit is one with our spirit. We are capable of loving like God loves and growing in the love of God.

But there is another problem with loving like God loves that we can't face after until we receive Jesus. When we are born again, we are immature spiritually.

We are a child spiritually with good intentions. But like children, when things get stressful, we tend to fall back into our old patterns of self-centered attitudes and behavior.

To consistently love like God loves, we need to grow spiritually into the image of Christ.

Romans 8:29

29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

NKJV

2 Cor 3:18

18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

NKJV

Growing into the image of Jesus=Growing in His love

1 Thess. 3:12

12 And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you...
NKJV

How do we grow spiritually?

To grow spiritually, we need to make the following three connections.

1. Connect to God. (Luke 5:16; Luke 11:1-4)
2. Connect to discipleship through the church. (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:46)
3. Connect to God's purpose for our life. (Matthew 4:19; Matthew 28:19-20)

If we do not grow spiritually by...

- Connecting to God
- Connecting to discipleship through His church
- Connecting to God's purpose

.... we will remain immature babes in Christ and we will not be consistent in the way we love God and others.

How is connecting to God's purpose critical to spiritual growth?

Jesus said that everyone who follows Him shares the same life purpose. (Matthew 4:19; Matthew 28:19-20)

That purpose is to make disciples of Jesus. This shift in our life purpose is critical to our motivation for spiritual growth. It can be compared to a man making changes in his life when he discovers he is going to be a father. It can be compared to a soldier making changes in his life when he discovers he is getting a promotion or going on a dangerous mission. It can be compared to an athlete making changes in his life when he discovers he has been accepted in the Olympic trials. It can be compared to a farmer making changes when in his life when he acquires a large section of fertile ground.

Having the right purpose is a powerful motivation for growth. If we are in Christ, we are capable of loving like God loves. But if we connect to His purpose, it is like telling astronauts that can get to the moon that their next mission is to land on Mars. They were committed before but this new mission, if they choose to accept it, motivates them to a whole new level of commitment.

And this is a major problem in motivation for spiritual growth in the church. Many believers in the church have not made a shift in their life purpose and have not assumed the responsibility of making disciples. Therefore, they are content with their current spiritual condition. They do not see a great need for spiritual growth.

The problem with this is that if you do not advance, you regress!

At some point, you lose your first love. You may keep going to church. You may keep serving in the church. But if you are connected to God's purpose, you lose your first love.

Are you this kind of believer?

What is your life purpose?

1. What motivates you to get out of bed most mornings?
2. What brings you the greatest joy?
3. What is your chief priority in the way you spend your time and our money?

If you did a survey and asked 100 children these questions, the normal answer would be playing.

If you did a survey and asked 100 teenagers these questions, the majority would answer my friends.

If you did a survey and asked 100 college students these questions, the majority would answer studying and preparing for my future.

If you did a survey and asked 100 people in the work force these questions, the majority would answer their work.

If you asked 100 married men these questions, the majority would answer providing for my family or my family.

If you asked 100 mothers these questions, the majority would answer providing for my family or my family.

If you asked 100 retirees these questions, the majority would answer enjoying my retirement?

There is certainly nothing wrong with playing, friendship, preparing for the future, work, family and enjoying retirement. But God has a greater purpose for each one of us that He wants us to embrace as our chief purpose.

That purpose is making disciples.

Prior to his death, Jesus said He had finished the work that the father had given Him to do.

John 17:4-5

4 I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.

5

NKJV

What work had He finished? He had not finished making atonement. When Jesus was hanging on the cross just prior to his death, He said His work of atonement was finished.

John 19:30

30 So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

NKJV

What work did Jesus finish before He died on the cross?

John 17:6-8

6 "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. 7 Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. 8 For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.
NKJV

He had finished His life purpose of making disciples.

Are you going to be able to say to God just before your death, I finished the work you gave me to do? At your memorial service, will people testify that you finished the work that God gave you to do?

It will not happen unless you surrender to God's purpose for your life?

One of my father's in the ministry is Jimmy Draper. He is 82 years old. He recently told me that he preached over 100 times last year. In 2015, at the age of 81, he wrote a book called, "Don't Quit Until Your Finished."

Do you really want to stop being self-centered and grow in the love of God? Surrender to God's purpose for your life.

Do you really want to glorify Jesus with your life? Surrender to God's purpose for your life.

Do you really want to make a difference for Jesus? Surrender to God's purpose for your life.

Do you really want to make the most of the dash? Surrender to God's purpose for your life.

Make Disciples!

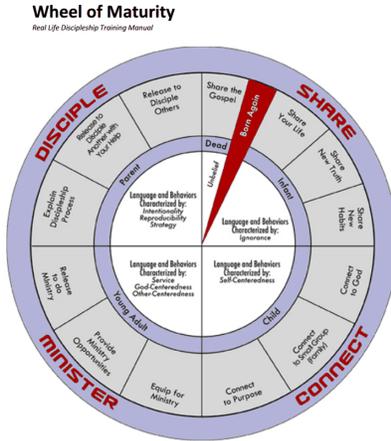
Let me give you one more reason to embrace God's purpose for your life. Disciples make disciples and a disciple is who you are! If Jesus is in you, discipleship is what you do because being a disciple is who you are! You were created for this!

To grow in the love of God and into the image of Jesus, we must connect to God's purpose for our life. Otherwise we will remain immature and be characterized by self-centeredness. We will not grow up into the mature man that is characterized by love for God and love for others.

This is so important to our spiritual growth that Jesus introduced his disciples to God's purpose for them before they even knew who He was that that He was going to make atonement for their sins. He introduced his disciples to God's purpose before they were born again and received the Holy Spirit.

Will you connect to God's purpose?

We use the graph below to train people to grow spiritually.



God's purpose for the first man and first woman was to form a team that could be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. His purpose was that they would have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle, the whole earth, and every living thing upon the earth. (Genesis 1:26-28)

Adam and Eve decided that they should determine what is right and wrong rather than letting God determine right and wrong. When they fell, they could no longer fulfill their purpose.

Jesus is called the last Adam.

1 Cor. 15:45

45 And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

NKJV

As the son of man, God's purpose for the last Adam was to save mankind from their fallen condition. Jesus promised that those who receive Him will one day rule on a new earth with a new heaven.

Until then Jesus said everyone who follows Him has the same life purpose.

Make Disciples!