

I dedicate this journal entry to my loving husband on his birthday. For not failing to smile whenever I remind him that he's only my temporary husband.

Love is One just as God is One just as We are One

10/4/2011

Lately, I had been asking God to increase my capacity to love others. I never saw how I could love others the way I'm commanded to love God. I knew this challenge could not be conquered by mere human effort. I could feel in my heart that the only way I could possibly learn to love others like I love myself was if I asked God, actually begged Him, every day, to fill me with His Spirit. But my pragmatist self was still wrestling with how I could put that into practice so it made sense in our world. So I took a closer look at The Great Commandment: *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself"* – Matthew 22:37-39

I had been reading *The End for which God Created the World* by Jonathan Edwards. I was moved to pick up this book at the local B&N during one of our pass-throughs from the eateries to our car. My husband Bill and I have been hosting a bible study on *Desiring God* with 4 other couples, and I found Edwards quoted so often in John Piper's book, that I decided to read one of the many Edwards books that had helped ignite Piper's passion for demonstrating to believers how *"The chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying Him forever"*.

When I got to the chapter that spoke of the Oneness of God, all of a sudden, a light bulb lit up in my head. In an instant, it all seemed to make sense. Let me explain. The Oneness of God is all over scripture. However, it wasn't until this point that I had considered it apart from the Trinity. I started thinking, how could I miss it? If love is defined as the deep and honest desire to want someone's happiness, and if the happiness of man is only found in God, then it would make sense that if I loved others, I would have to be spending my time with them and away from them (in prayer) making sure that they could see God Himself (not His blessings) as their ultimate good, hence, their ultimate happiness. Therefore, the only way I could show them my love for them was, not only by speaking the truth of the gospel, but being the truth of the gospel to them. I would have to, as Piper would put it, "...labor and suffer to enthrall [them] with what's infinitely and eternally satisfying: The Glory of God". This realization of the mind brought comfort to my soul and gave me a different perspective on what it might be like to live the Kingdom of God today while we're under His grace. In other words, maybe others could start to take a peek at what it might be like, to the tiniest degree, to behold the glory of God during their brief existence here on earth... through me! I thought, maybe our new resurrection bodies are not something that starts in the future, but are a work in progress that started before the beginning of time and are continually taking form as we grow in our faith as Christians and in God, and is only complete with the return of Christ.

This brings me back to the relationship between the "first" and the "second" greatest commandment(s). Notice that when Jesus answers the Pharisees' question as to which is the most important commandment in the Law of Moses, Jesus replies with two answers. A first

(in rank) and then, a second (in rank), but “like” the first: “...and a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” - Matthew 22:39. So His answering a question which implies singularity, with an answer that implies plurality, but yet linked by the word “like”, must mean that the “like” makes the answer somehow singular. So Jesus seems to imply that loving God is like or equivalent to loving others as ourselves. I’m not so good at math, but I thought, according to the law of relativity, if $A = B$, and $B = C$, then C must equal A also. In other words, loving others(C) and loving ourselves (B) ought, not only constitute the same thing in relation to each other, but also the same thing as is relates to loving God (A). Simply put, loving God with all your heart, soul and mind, must be like loving, not only ourselves, but also like loving others.

Furthermore, our love for God ought to be somewhat equal to our love for ourselves, which must be somewhat equal to our love for others. But still the question was, how so? Well, all I could think at the moment was leading me back to the Oneness of God. If heart, mind and soul are one, and we are to love God with all these “parts” of the body, and we are the body of Christ of which He is the Head, then love is One too in that loving parts of our body, we are actually loving ourselves, and in turn loving God.

But the bible says that God loved us first. And Jesus named the love of God first. So the love of God, although equivalent to the love we have for ourselves and for others is, not only superior in rank, but the actual original source of all the love of which we speak.

Then, what is it about us that we love to begin with, I wondered? I reflected back to my earlier days and about the time when I began to really seek the Lord and how it “coincided” with an increased self-esteem and a new found sense of self-acceptance. As I learned who the God of the bible was and came to recognize my sin in relationship to a holy God, I began to know myself and who I was IN God. I remember that it seemed as if I had started to love myself more. But, was I loving my sinful-self more, or the Holy Spirit growing inside of me? It dawned on me the possibility that the more we grow in God, the more we tend to increasingly love ourselves. On the same side of the equation, the way we show our love for God and the increasing fellowship we hold in Him is to naturally praise God and tell others about the amazing joy we find in Him! This glorifies God. And that must be the reason why we were designed to live in community.

So it must be that the more I am filled with the Spirit of the Lord, the more my capacity to love others increases. It would make sense that any outpour of the joy resulting from my ever increasing level of union with God would naturally spill onto others! And as a result, back to God! So what originated with God’s love for me as an expression of His glory in the life, death and resurrection of His Son, is so worthy, so beautiful, so holy, so magnificent, so infinite...that it overflows out of Him, and onto us like the sun overflows radiance and warmth in the form of a fiery, yet gentle outpour of goodness. The overflow of all that undeserved goodness fills up my heart, mind and soul to a degree that it cannot be contained by my sinful body. It ends up spilling onto those, who could, in turn, do the same. I am being sanctified, cleansed, purified of my old self. *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”* - 2 Corinthians 5:17 This also explains why during my encounters with God when His fullness in me and mine in His feel like an embrace, my natural emotion is to weep. It’s like I cannot contain his

fullness! I cry out in what could be described a combination of love, joy, mourning, meekness, humility and a longing, a thirst and a hunger for more of Him...much more! And it is so, that, in each and every disciple out there, there's an outpour of love that is ever increasing and continues to mushroom until the whole earth has been touched by the described overflow through the proclamation of the grace and peace of the gospel. Some will choose to cover themselves with this outpour and accept His love, and keep it going. Others will not. But the point is that this is how love is capable of filling the whole earth one disciple at a time. It must be filled with faith that projects love in self and in others with a certain common denominator. So the B(us) and the C(others) must become one, and not only be accompanied by A(God), but be totally in A for the relationship to be true. $A = (B+C) + A$. Mathematically, this equation would not make sense unless B and C added up to zero. And that's exactly what needs to happen. B & C must cease being the old B & C and become the new B & C (we'll call it O) in A. We must die to ourselves, put on a new heart, a new spirit, and dissolve or disappear into A. This is how we can love others like we love ourselves...by becoming an O (for One). We can love others by becoming one in each other and one in God.

So it makes sense that we would love God to the same degree or in proportion to how much we love ourselves in God and in the same degree that we have allowed our heart, mind and soul to be satiated by the Holy Spirit. Because if the Spirit is fully within us, what is there not to love? We can be as happy as the degree of indwelling fullness in God and as the degree by which we are able to emanate this fullness in the form of overflowing love towards others. In other words, our capacity to love others is in direct relationship with our degree of fullness in God, our knowledge of God and our enjoyment in God which leads to an overflow in the form of praise to the glory of our Creator. We were created to reflect the beauty, perfection and holiness of God unto like subjects, namely others, so as to complete the enjoyment of ourselves in God. This pleases God immensely, as God is for God's glory and no one else's outside of Himself.

As our faith increases, our love for God, and in turn, for others, increases as well... As our knowledge of God increases (mind), both our love for God (heart) and our joy in God (soul) increases. This makes our spirit "rejoice and be glad". As an expression of our joy and gladness in God, we cry out in praise to all who will hear. Paul says in Galatians 5:6 "...What is important is faith expressing itself in love". In doing so, we become one with each other, one *with* God and one *in* God. His will is aligned with ours. Our prayers are answered each and every time, because what we ask of God is no longer His blessings. We can say that we love others because our deepest desire for them becomes their ultimate goodness...and ours: God Himself. We are one, just as God is One, just as love is one. Glory be to God, the "Holy One of Israel".

Post Reflection: As I prepare myself for battle (discipleship) each and every day, I know that no matter how bloody, how wounded I might become, I know that God allows this battle, so that I will dress up for it with His full armor of righteousness. His outpour of love might come in the form of fire and sword, but it will only help me grow in faith, and, more

importantly, grow in my love for Him and for others. Suddenly, the scripture from the book of Isaiah that keeps following me the last few weeks makes all the sense in the world. "...and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard" – Isaiah 58:8

10/5/2011 – During my morning reading and less than 24 hours after writing this God inspired journal entry, the Lord showed me two pieces of scripture that revealed in a few short verses what took me 3 pages to describe. Here I thought I had discovered something original. Well, it is original...because it comes from the One that is in me as I am in Him. Jesus's prayer for all believers is continually being answered. Glory be to God!

"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit". - 2 Corinthians 3:18

Jesus prays for all believers: *"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them." - John 17:20-23*

My prayer is that you will find oneness in God and oneness in others just as the Father is in the Son and the Son in the Father that you may be fully in Him, so that the world may believe by seeing the love of the Father and the glory of the Son in you.