

Heart to Heart

*Bringing our hearts to Him,
Receiving His Heart for us!*

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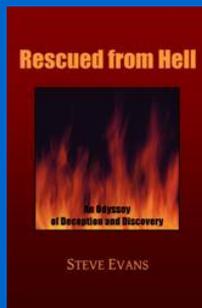
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Dear ,

What I'm writing about in today's message has never come easily or naturally to me. Maybe that's why I had to learn from the Lord how to "break it down" into manageable steps. Even so, I cannot claim to be good at it, only persistent at trying...

Steve

It's BIG, But What Is It?

Knowing what it is, is the easy part...

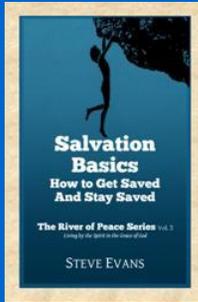
It is the most important thing that is required for us to grow. It is our number one daily assignment. It is the fulfillment of our two purposes. It is our appointed destiny. It is our most important work--the one thing that must be done. **Is it faith?** Is that what we are supposed to be working on?

Sister Teresa of Avila said that God is not nearly as concerned with the work that we do, as with the _____ with which it is done. Bob Jones, a modern day prophet, says he had a near death experience of heaven in which he saw a long line of people waiting to get in. Jesus was asking EVERYONE, "Did you learn how to _____?" St. Paul says that no matter what accomplishments we have had in life, if we have not grown _____, it will all have been wasted time. **Jesus commands it of us, but even God cannot grow it in everyone.** What is it?

You know it: It's love.

The command that is required of us to fulfill, is to grow a great love for God and for others. It sounds impossible--we are to be loving God with ALL of our heart, soul, mind and strength and to be loving others as we love ourselves at all times. No time off for good behavior. Don't set this aside and get back to it later. It has to be done in the eternal, ever-present NOW of God and you.

As a young Christian this command of Jesus seemed, frankly, too huge and unmanageable. I couldn't wrap my mind around what it might look like, so I decided to work on little pieces of it at a time, like learning to forgive, learning to beat my anger to death, and learning to be kind when provoked. Looking back I can see that the Lord was helping me put the pieces together. **Only**

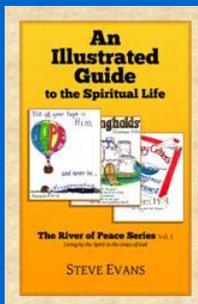


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recently have I seen the puzzle's picture!

Jesus Saved This Command for Last *Now why would He do a thing like that...*

When Jesus began His ministry, He taught the command to love others in the way that is still most familiar to us: We are to treat others as we would want them to treat us and to love others as we love ourselves. He rested His case on Old Testament authority (Leviticus 19:18): What could be better than that? At the Last Supper, however, He issued a revision in the form of a "new commandment": His disciples were to love each other "as I have loved you" (John 15:12). What's going on?

The early version of the command to love had been an appeal to enlightened self-interest. It was certainly the highest expression of love ever given (up to that time) and it will raise the standard for anyone who is willing to obey scripture where love is concerned. But it is still based on the love of self. Apparently, that's not good enough, but it had to do until Jesus could demonstrate a superior form of love and put the Model for it in place. **To do that He had to live among us.** Only then could He make the appeal to love be based upon the way that He loves us.

The way this works is very interesting! Whenever I find myself wondering how to respond to someone, all I have to do is ask myself, "How does Jesus treat me when I'm like that?" **What a difference that One shift of perspective makes!** "Would He be kind and gentle in correcting me? Would He tell me the truth even if it hurt? Would He be patient with my many failings? Would He respond in kind?" It is amazing how this sweeps away the tragic failing of basing love on self--"How could they do that? I would never to do that, or say that!"--which always ends in censoriousness and judgment...

The Way to Grow Love

Practice makes for progress, not perfection...

We tend to head right out into the field, planting our seeds of love and hoping to grow a great harvest, but like actual farming, it's not that easy. Here are four steps or stages in growing love. I can't say that I'm a great lover of God or people, yet, but this progression is helping. First let's look at the two great commandments:

Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." Mark 12:29-31 ESV

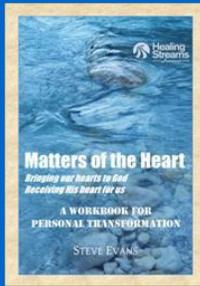
The progression is there in the text.

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1) We love God because He is our God--He loved us *first* (1 John 4:19). Think what this means in terms of the first command: God is already loving each one of us with His whole heart, mind, soul and strength at all times. So our first task is to **get really good at receiving the revelation of His love**. This comes to us in four main ways: 1) as mercy, 2) as help, 3) by His Word and 4) by His Spirit. These four mighty streams pour His love into us. So, get a ladle of faith and keep filling your bucket with endless grace and mercy!

2) RSVP: As we receive these revelations of love we can return love to God. Anyone (even a king Saul) can show love to God when their affections are stirred. **This new kind of love is far sturdier**. Our two main ways of loving God are to trust Him, especially when it is hard to trust, and to obey Him, especially when it is hard to obey. He rewards us with a river of peace whenever our trust and obedience combine to form what He considers to be a loving response to His Person and His leadership. **I call the Peace of Christ our "report card"** on how well we are doing with the first and greatest commandment. The Holy Spirit is in charge of the grading.

3) We learn to love ourselves as He loves us. It is so scary to have a sinful side that we all tend to have a hard time forgiving, accepting and unconditionally loving ourselves. But as we see the flawless way He loves us, it becomes safe, even desirable to be ourselves. He loves us and meets us just as we are in all our moments, so we can too. Of course He wants to grow us beyond where we are, but **the love comes first**.

4) Now we are ready to apply to others the same love that we are receiving and enjoying. As we are "trained" by the Lord to see our sins, yet still see Him showing us grace, mercy and love, we become equipped to give forgiveness, acceptance, and unconditional love to others. Sure, He will want to change and grow them too, but **love comes first**.

Got it? Now, give it away!

**From We to Thee
Preparing for the Harvest...**



From the pages of our new
website forerunners4Him.org
has come a new book:

Salvation Basics: How to Get Saved and Stay Saved.

This is also the book that the men at the Mission have helped me to write. It has been through working with them that I have gained far more clarity (I believe) into the deeper issues of how to stay saved. Hey, we all know that getting saved is easy--it is staying in the joy of His salvation (Ps 51) that is the tricky part. Check out a sample at amazon.

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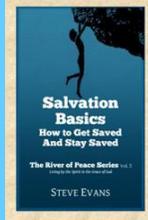
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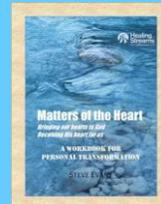
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Steve and Eunice

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Let's all jump in!

Sincerely,

Steve and Eunice Evans

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