



Christian Ambassadors, Inc.

My Brother's Keeper

Volume 14, Number 3, July-September, 2009

GROWING on the WORD

A scripture study

The Word of God is the source of light, truth and power, for those who seek it's meaning and apply it to their life. Jesus Christ is the word made flesh, and we seek to follow him.

John 8:12 (NIV) – *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

Each issue of “My Brother’s Keeper” features a WORD study. This issue’s Word Study is from Alan Griffie, Co-founder of Christian Ambassadors.

The Love of God

By Alan W. Griffie

“The Love of God.” I like that title for this Word Study because it can be interpreted three different ways: 1) the love that

God has for us, 2) the love that we have for God, and 3) the God-like (Christ-like) love that we have for others. All three ways of looking at the love of God, or the love of Jesus Christ, are essential aspects of our Christian faith.

For those of us of the Christian faith, the connection between the love of God and the love of Jesus Christ are inseparable. Jesus said in **John 14:11**, *“Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me.”*

Anything we say about the *Love of God*, we apply equally to the *Love of Christ*. So let us begin by looking at the first of the three ways you can interpret the phrase, “The Love of God.”

God’s Love For Us

John 3:16 - *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

It is almost impossible to understand the kind of love it would take to ask your only begotten son to make that kind of sacrifice. Abraham came close to understanding that kind of love, when God asked him to make a similar sacrifice with his son Isaac.

Genesis 22:2 - *And he said, “Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”*

By asking Abraham to make that most difficult decision, God was establishing a precedent that got recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures for the people to read and study. When the time came fifteen hundred years later for God to sacrifice His only begotten Son, the people should have been able to recognize and appreciate the sacrifice God made so we might have eternal life. Sadly, many have missed the message.

Christ's love, like the love of His Father, and in many ways like the love of a parent for their child, is not soft and mushy, permitting us to think and do anything we want with no discipline or accountability.

Proverbs 13:24 (NIV) - *He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.*

Sharon was listening to a talk show on CBN (the Christian Broadcasting Network) a while

back and the guest on the show was saying that many people today act as though God is a big marshmallow. They act as if God is a soft push over, who is so desirous of our love that he will accept any response that we offer, accepting it unconditionally, forgiving us for any shortcomings, and giving us any blessing that we ask for. This view is a discredit to the nature of God. God, and the gospel message of Jesus Christ, possess a balance and harmony that goes beyond mere human reasoning.

It became necessary for Christ to come into the world to teach the people that God is a loving God, who cares about the welfare of his people. But also, that God's love is firm, requiring accountability. Jesus taught that the Love of God is like that of a good, loving father, and He demonstrated that love. In His love for the people, Jesus taught them about God, about the kingdom, and what it means to be a son of God. He demonstrated His faith in the Father and His adherence to the principles that God taught.

Jesus expressed compassion and understanding when the people failed to understand or fell short in their attempts to follow his teachings.

Matthew 15:32 – Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, “I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.”

And Jesus responded quickly and firmly when someone chose not to follow in the ways of God, or to go against the principles of God for their own selfish interests.

Mark 3:4-5 – And he saith unto them [in the synagogue], “Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?” But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, “Stretch forth thine hand.” And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

Jesus Christ expressed his love for us by: 1) teaching what is right, 2) demonstrating what is right, 3) having compassion when someone fell short, and 4) taking a firm stand when someone deliberately disobeys. Isn't that the same way you would expect a loving parent to treat their child? And that is how God treats us, His children. He treats us in ways that help us grow into responsible citizens of His Kingdom.

Christ spent three years teaching His disciples about the nature of His Father, about His Father's Kingdom, and about how they should treat others. He loves us so much that He then went to the cross to die and rise again so we might have an opportunity to receive eternal life.

Our Love For God

When Jesus was asked, what is the greatest commandment, He replied with the following words,

Matthew 22:37-38 - Jesus said unto him, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.”

It's the first of great commandments that we love God. But do we really love anyone because we are commanded to do so? Most people tend to rebel when someone commands them to do something. We may respect God and want to please him, but in reality,

1 John 4:19 - We love him, because he first loved us.

So what is our response to the love that God first showed us? One of the ways we show our love is by responding to and obeying God's Word as contained in the scriptures.

John 14:15 – “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

The Bible is full of His teachings about God and the principles we should apply to our lives. Those teachings have been preserved for our benefit. We need to study those teachings, listen to what others have to say about them, examine, question, challenge, and seek understanding to the best of our ability. And we need to ask God to reveal the truth unto us. He has promised that His Spirit will instruct us, inspire us, and bring to remembrance those things that are true.

John 14:26 – *“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”*

If we really want to respond to God's love by following His Word, no one teaching, or set of teachings, taken by themselves will be sufficient. There is always more that we can learn about the ways of God. But I think one of the most important, fundamental things we must learn and have faith in is that “God is Real”.

Exodus 3:14 – *And God said unto Moses, “I AM THAT I AM”: and he said, “Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.”*

I believe one of the reasons many people do not take God more seriously today is because they have never become fully convinced that God and Satan are anything more than the concepts of good and evil. They may be fully convinced that good is better than evil, and that this world will be a better place in which to live if more people practiced the good principles of love, peace, patience, kindness, compassion, etc. And, they may try to be good people, caring for others and seeking peace in the world. But, I wonder if they really believe that there is a place where their spirit resided with God prior to this lifetime, and that they will stand in

judgment before God after this lifetime.

Many people live their life as though this life is all there is and they need to enjoy it to the best of their ability. But, if we believe in what the scriptures have taught us about God's Kingdom, we have to know that this life is a serious, but brief step through eternity. It is a time of probation, a time in which we demonstrate to God which side we wish to choose; the ways of God or the ways of Satan. I'll tell you right now, I believe in the reality of God and I want to be on His side when this life comes to an end. I want to serve my Lord and Master Jesus Christ! I may not always do the best job, and I may get off the track at times, but I know whose side I want to be standing on when Christ comes again to usher us into His Kingdom.

It's not always easy to do the right thing or to understand what God wants us to do. But, seeking and responding to God's call on our life is the first step of responding to the love that God has for us, and expressing our love to God.

The third aspect of this word study is how we show God-like love to others.

Our Love For Others

John 13:34-35 - *A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

“That ye love one another, as I have loved you.” Not simply that we are to love one another, but that we are to love as Christ loved. The love of Jesus Christ, was expressed to his disciples as he, 1) taught them what was right, 2) demonstrated what was right, 3) had compassion when they fell short, and 4) took a firm stand when they failed to obey. The love of Jesus Christ was not soft and mushy like a marshmallow.

Are we going to love our neighbor (and ourselves) with truth and firmness, or are we going to express an outward appearance of love, by smiling and accepting anything and everything that a person says or does without conditions? It is much easier to accept someone's right to do and say whatever he or she wants, than it is to take a stand against something they do or say that is wrong. And, it is much easier to believe that God accepts us just as we are, with no strings or conditions.

Did you know that the words, “*unconditional love*” or “*without condition*” do not appear anywhere in the scriptures. God loves us so much that He sent His only Begotten Son into the world so we might have eternal life, but He doesn't accept us with no strings or conditions. Jesus told the woman who was caught in adultery to, “go and sin no more.” When you repent and accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, God accepts you as a cleansed, new being, but He also expects you to go and live as that new being.

If we have chosen to take up the cross of Jesus Christ, and if we profess to love our neighbor as Christ has loved us, then we have an obligation to help our neighbor to understand the truth, just as we should hope that others would do for us. We don't express love for a little child by sitting idly by while they lie and cheat to get their own way. And we don't express love for our neighbor by sitting idly by while they lie and cheat to get their own way.

Jude 21-23 (ISV) – remain in God's love as you look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that brings eternal life. Show mercy to those who have doubts. Save others by snatching them from the fire. To others, show mercy, but with fear, hating even the clothes stained by their sinful lives.

Christ did not rebuke the scribes and Pharisees so he could embarrass them in front of their peers. He rebuked them because they were headed down a path of unrighteousness that was bound to eventually destroy them. If we see something that is wrong, or if we see something that isn't right, we should do what we can to correct it. It's not easy. If a person is deliberately doing something wrong for their own gain, they will resent your interference. And, if the person is doing something wrong unintentionally or because they thought what they were doing was right, they may get their feelings hurt when you mention it. But in either case, the person cannot grow in the ways of

the Lord if no one helps them see the better way.

The Love of God

There are many in the world today who do not believe in Jesus Christ, or who do not even believe in a one true God. As a witness for Jesus Christ, we must be willing and eager to proclaim the Love of God. To do so with passion and conviction, we must truly believe with all our being that God is, that God truly loves us, and that He loves us enough that He offered His only begotten Son that we might have life eternal.

If we truly believe in God's love for us, loving Him is the easy part. Responding to His call on our life may be a little harder. But, it should be something we are eager to do because He first loved us.

And finally, sharing the love of God with others, and doing so in the same way that Jesus would, may be the hardest. Other people are not as easy for us to love as Jesus. Sometimes people can be very hard to love. And especially if we do so with the same firmness that Jesus would do.

It may seem hard to love some people, but knowing that God loves both you and them makes it possible.

Philippians 4:13 - I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.



Sharing the Good News

“We are therefore Christ's Ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

II Corinthians 5:20-21

From: Jeffery H. USP Victorville, Adelanto, CA

Dear Sharon, Alan, Brothers & Sisters, Greetings in the name of Jesus! I received your letter and my first [issue of] “My Brother's Keeper”. I must say that it was a blessing in receiving it. It came just in time, for I've been dealing with a lot of issues that was in it. Also, your Spiritual Growth Lesson #44 dealt with a problem that I've dealt with for years now.

In “My Brother's Keeper”, the Devotional Study, “God's Shank” hit home; for I used to be a “shank maker” in my day. I used to keep one on me at all times (I must say I've never used one), but I kept one close. But now! I have found Jesus! I now carry the Bible close to me. I must confess it is an unbeatable weapon.

Thank you always for your prayers, letters, and studies. I look forward in receiving a lot more. Your loving Brother in Christ, Jeffery.

(Good News Continued on Page 6)



Faith

He has shown through His perfect love,
All His works were known above.
Our Father in Heaven was well pleased,
His greatest selfless act met our needs.

We must never forget,
Everlasting life we will accept.
Our Lord died for us that day,
Came back to life and gave us faith.

For He is the Christ who we must find.
In His love our faith shall shine.

We must trust in Him,
With our hearts we will follow.

In our King we must confide,
And put our doubts aside.
Reach deep inside and run to Jesus,
For His faith is perfect to lead us.

Drawing by Jason Tuttle, Poem by Gary Waskul; both from Avenal State Prison, CA

**From: Miguel Z.
Arkansas Valley Corr.
Crowley, CO**

Dear Sharon, The letter of introduction into your [Spiritual Growth] Lesson #45, [Partnership – God's Part and Our Part], got me so enthused. It was one of the best. I really enjoyed it – all of it is the truth! Thank you Sharon and Alan. You did a good job. I had tears in my eyes, as it put me to thank the Lord for being there for us. I want to thank you for all you have done for all the others and me.

Sharon, I really liked the "Questions for Personal or Group Study" in Lesson #45. I liked all 10 of them. It makes a guy stop and think of his life in prison.

Like:

"Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust"
(Psalm 16:1).

And;

"Thou wilt shew me the path of life" (Psalm 16:11).

I hope that when you get this humble letter it will find you and Mr. Griffiee in the best of health and in God's care. May God Bless you and Alan and keep you safe. Keep up the good work. With love and respect, Miguel.

**From: Andre C.
SCI – Fayette,
LaBelle, PA**

Dear Sister Sharon, I pray that the ministry God has given you and Brother Alan is always prosperous. I pray that God's grace

and peace be upon you both and love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I read the word quite often to gain the knowledge of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Do you know that there are days when I'm not reading the word that I feel as if something is out of place? I don't know quite how to explain that, but I have to read the word of God every day. It has been so much a part of my life now that I feel empty if I don't take some time to read it.

I would like to thank you for the newsletters that you send and the lesson plans. There are so many of us who really appreciate our brother and sister in Christ. It is a joy to know there are prayer warriors out there who want the best for us in Christ Jesus, even behind these walls.

Sister Sharon, through the Holy Spirit you have been a blessing to us all. Thank you! May God give you comfort and joy always. May His mercy and goodness follow you through all of your days.
(Psalm 23:6) Your Brother in Christ, Andre

**From: Gary W.
Avenal Correctional,
Avenal, CA**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

These are such trying times we live in and people on the whole need all of us to comfort them.

Bring them willingly to our Lord Jesus by showing your loving calmness and peaceful continuity in these uncertain times.

Myself, as an outcast, banished to prison, I read a Bible that was left in the cell. As an adult and with help from God, I could understand the words I read. I learned to fear my Great Father in Heaven and also that He loves us more than we will ever know.

He loves all of His children so very much. He can give joyful peace in our lives like none other. Please share God's great comfort with others and show them:

Matthew 6:25-34 (KJV) – Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly

Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

This message is for everyone who worries about today, tomorrow, and their future. This is a powerful Scripture that proves our Father in Heaven loves us so very much.

Brothers and Sisters, share God's word with those who need comfort. This is what we are all called to do.

Matthew 28:19-20 (KJV) *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

Show the way, show God's love, and show the Spirit in you by example. Turn the turmoil into great peace from Jesus' words in **Matthew 6:25-34**.

Let the Spirit guide us all to do what we must to comfort those who have fallen into the death of our times. May God be with you always as your walk matches His great footsteps. Forever in Christ, Gary-Brother Free.



Belief Is Only the Beginning

Those who obey my commandments are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them, and I will love them. And I will reveal myself to each one of them. John 14:21

While God wants our belief, He wants us to move beyond belief to obedience. We who accept Jesus as our Savior and Lord must dig deeper and expand our understanding of who He is and then act on those beliefs.

For example, if we firmly believe that polishing our prison-issue boots to a high-gloss finish everyday will knock a dime off our sentences, we will wear out the buffing brush. If we knew for sure that having neatly ironed clothes, curled hair, and polished fingernails would get us early parole, we would do it.

What about our belief in Jesus? Can it move from simply acknowledging the existence of a supreme being to real faith in a God who knows our names and inmate numbers? Are we willing to study God's Word and see it as the "owner's manual" for our lives? Are we willing to surrender our lives to Christ as our Lord, our Master? Are we willing to desire His will and obey what He wants us to do with our lives? Now we are getting down to it!

What does it mean to receive Christ as the Lord of our lives? It means He is in charge. He's the boss. God says of Himself, "*Believe in me and understand that I alone am God. ...I am the Lord, and there is no other Savior*" (Isaiah 43:10-11).

We work in partnership with the Lord, but our role is to joyfully obey. For those of us who have problems with authority figures, we need to remember that Jesus is a loving Lord, not a self-centered, power-hungry Master. We can trust Him with our lives.

Making it personal: What step of obedience will you take today?

Prayer: God, I don't want to be contented just to know about You. I want to know You, by doing what You say. Amen.

Read: Jonah 1-3 to hear what happened to Jonah when he didn't obey God; and then when he did.

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Freedom's Song

By: Merissa Lee Kelley, May 6, 2004

Heavenly Father, enthroned above
We praise you for your endless love
Abounding in grace and mercy shown
We worship you...and you alone
Thank you for your only Son
For through his death your will was done
With grateful hearts, we humbly pray
That you will guide us everyday
Compassionate Father, we bless your name
And rest in knowing...you stay the same
We seek your wisdom for our nation
To remind each future generation
Of the hopes and dreams of freedom's song
Being "founded" in God...is what made us strong
"In God we trust"...must stay our prayer
Please keep us God, within your care
Amen.

My Brother's Keeper

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Alan W. Griffee, Production Manager

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Inspirational articles, especially from current or former prison inmates, are invited and will be prayerfully considered for publication. Please request a copy of the publication guidelines before submitting an article for consideration.

Vision Statement - Christian Ambassadors exists to bring the ministry of Jesus Christ into the lives of people, demonstrating how the gospel teachings can help a person live a more abundant life, filled with joy, hope, and purpose.

If you, any member of your family, or a friend, are imprisoned, wanting to find new hope, purpose, and direction in life, please contact us at Christian Ambassadors. Our website can be visited at:

<http://www.christian-ambassadors.org>.