

The Revolution of Love (Reading)

by George Verwer

The revolution of love is a spiritual revolution that the Holy Spirit wants to bring about in our hearts and lives, characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5-6, Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:2, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, Ephesians 4:15, Philippians 4:13, James 3:13

Topics: "Audio Books"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal experience of distributing Christian leaflets in a one-day campaign. Despite already distributing a large number of leaflets, the speaker and a few volunteers decided to continue distributing more late at night. The speaker emphasizes the desperate state of the world, with millions of people suffering and dying without knowing the love of God. The speaker challenges the audience to examine their own love for others and their willingness to serve and sacrifice for them. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the importance of spiritual balance and growth in the Christian faith.

Transcript

The Revolution of Love by George Verwer Copyright George Verwer 1989 Acknowledgements The message of this book would not have been possible without the dedication of my dear wife, Dreena, who has stood with me now in the battle for twenty-nine years. Many thanks also go to my editor, Dr Ruth March, for her tireless efforts to transform spoken messages into print. Chapter 1 The Revolution of Love Jesus Christ was a revolutionary, the greatest and most complete revolutionary this world has ever known.

Not a political revolutionary, but a spiritual revolutionary. And I believe that Christianity is a revolution of love, a revolution that the Holy Spirit wants to bring about in our hearts and lives as he radically changes the way that we think and act. I am convinced that there is nothing more important in all the world than this.

As we see the state of the Church worldwide and the state of many believers today, it is easy to become discouraged. We look for discipleship, we look for those who are working together in unity, in prayer, in power, and we see quarrels and divisions, complacency and mediocrity. Many people are asking, why is the Church in such a state? Why is Christianity today making so little impact? Some people think that somehow we have missed some essential teaching or experience, and if we can only rediscover this secret through new meetings and books, deliverance and restoration will once again be brought to the Church.

Now it seems to me that it would not be very fair of God to keep secret the most basic ingredient of Christian effectiveness, and in fact I do not believe this ingredient is a secret at all. Let us look at Galatians chapter 5 verses 22 through 26. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live in the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit, let us not become conceited, provoking, and envying each other.

The fruit of the Holy Spirit is love. But what does the Bible mean here by love? In 1 John we find a clear and simple stated definition, God is love. In other words, true love is from God.

It does not exist apart from Him. We know that God is one. Therefore, we cannot think of God the Father without thinking of love.

We cannot think of the Lord Jesus Christ without thinking of love. We cannot think of the Holy Spirit without thinking of love. There is no separation.

God does not send love, He does not manufacture it, God is love. Now that appears to be a very simple statement, but I am convinced that only an extremely small percentage of believers have really come to grips with this truth. The basic message.

This is, I believe, the basic ingredient that is largely lacking in Christianity today, and the lack of it is the source of most of our problems. It is the cancer that is eating away at the church, but it is no secret. In fact, it is so non-secretive that it is written on almost every page of the New Testament.

And yet, because our hearts are so hard and cold, and because we are so self-centred, we do not really believe that the basic message of the New Testament is love. I am absolutely convinced that most of us miss this most obvious and often repeated message, even while we are laying great emphasis on what is an orthodox interpretation of the Bible, what is biblical teaching. Well, I would like to ask, what is biblical teaching? We have long discussions on the second coming, on the meaning of the crucifixion, on the church, and the Holy Spirit, and so on.

But what about love and humility and brokenness? These usually go into a separate category. But I want to tell you that if your teaching does not include love, humility, and brokenness, then your teaching is not biblical. There are thousands, even millions, of people who claim to be orthodox Christians because they cling to a certain set of beliefs in accordance with the Bible.

They are aware that they do not practice much humility, but they do not think that makes them any less orthodox. They are aware that they do not really love other Christians, especially those who are different from them, but that does not cause them to think that their teaching is not biblical. They may admit that they know nothing of serving others and considering others better than themselves, and yet they consider themselves Bible-believing or orthodox Christians.

They could not be more wrong. This is not Christianity, but a travesty of Christianity, thinking that we can be orthodox without having humility, thinking we can call ourselves Bible-believing Christians, though our lives do not show love or the other fruits of the Spirit. In fact, I believe that this is the greatest error that has ever hit the Church of Jesus Christ.

Teaching cannot be separated from practical living. I cannot see Jesus Christ as some sort of split personality, partly doctrinal and partly moral, trying to bring two separate realms of truth into our minds. He is not, on one occasion, satisfying our intellectual curiosity by teaching us things about God, and in a separate exercise, meeting our moral need by trying to make us more like the character of God.

You cannot have a correct understanding about God without wanting to live in a way that pleases God. Oh, someone says, there is a good evangelical Christian, he has a very good understanding of the Bible, he doesn't have much love for others, and he's not very humble, but he certainly understands the Bible. I tell you, he does not understand the Bible if he does not love other Christians.

What do we read in 1 John 4, 8? Whoever does not love does not know God. There is no more biblical teaching than love, and apart from love, there is no biblical teaching. Love is the foundation of all other biblical teaching, and you cannot build the building of biblical truth without knowing that foundation.

The wise man. Let's turn to some verses that teach us a lot about this revolution of love and how it works out in everyday life. James, chapter 3, beginning at verse 13.

Who is wise and understanding among you? Well, who is wise and understanding among you? Is it the person who knows all the answers? Is it the person who has the solution to every problem, the one who always knows which way to go, how to tell people about Christ, how to hand out literature? Is this the person who has true wisdom? Possibly, but not necessarily. The passage goes on, let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. In other words, God says to the man who has the correct theory and who knows what the Bible teaches, all right, let's see it in your life.

First, above everything else, let's see it lived out. If a man is truly wise, then he is truly humble. Reading on in James, we find that certain things mean that a person cannot have true wisdom, but just spiritual cleverness.

But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. If we show off our great knowledge and understanding in the Bible, and yet our lives are not filled with humility and love, but with bitterness and pride, we are actually lying against the truth in our lives. And how do you think non-believers feel when they see Christians saying one thing and living another? James goes on to explain bluntly where this false wisdom comes from.

Such wisdom does not come down from heaven, but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. It must indeed please the devil with the damage that it can cause. An illustration.

Let me illustrate this kind of spiritual cleverness with an incident that occurred in our work some time ago. A team member made a mistake when doing something practical. Naturally, one of his colleagues was keen to put him right.

Very quickly he said, this is wrong, you should not have done it that way. The first team member said defensively, well, I was told to do it that way. The second even more heatedly said, well, I know it is not right, this is what you should have done, and soon they had a full scale argument.

Later on, I was able to have a talk with the one who claimed to be right. I said to him, do you still feel that you were right in that situation? Absolutely, he said. I was right and everyone else knows that I was right, and indeed he had managed to convince everyone else that he was right, not only on the practical point, but in the way that he had acted.

Then I said, tell me, when you spoke to him, were you controlled by the Holy Spirit or by your emotions? He stopped at that and thought for a moment. Well, I don't suppose that I was really what you would call controlled by the Holy Spirit. I said, well then, you were controlled by your emotions.

He was a bit hesitant, but he said, all right, I admit that I was controlled by my emotions and not by the Holy Spirit, but I was still right. So I said, but surely the word of God says that those who are controlled by their sinful nature cannot please God. Romans chapter 8 verse 8. He wasn't right.

The way I think, the way I believe Christ thought, the way I believe the New Testament teaches, he was absolutely wrong in the way that he had acted, because even though he was telling what he believed to be the truth, he was saying it without love. And the Bible teaches that you cannot tell the truth without love and still please God. We ask, is it true? Is it theologically accurate? Is it orthodox? And all the time God is looking at the state of our hearts and our lack of love for our brothers and sisters.

I believe that the curse of today is orthodoxy without love, orthodoxy without power, orthodoxy without the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we as Christians try to communicate in areas that have been traditionally Roman Catholic or Muslim or communist, we must always remember that no matter how right we are about an issue, the minute we act without love, we are being controlled by our own nature and not living in Christ, and that is sin. No matter how much truth comes from our mouths about the need for repentance and faith in Christ and about the inability of other religions or a philosophy to bring people to God, if it is spoken without love, it will not please God.

That is what the Bible is saying in these verses. This wisdom that does not come with kindness and gentleness and love is not wisdom. It is unspiritual, devilish.

Some of the most horrible and unbelieving situations can arise in the church amongst those who have lit truth but do not live the truth. The next verse says, For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and every evil practice. Where there is no true love, where there is no true wisdom, you cannot hope to have Christians working together in an orderly way.

In the work of Operation Mobilization, we have seen again and again that no matter how much people know about the Bible, if they are not living it out in their lives, there will soon be disorder, confusion, and pain. Pure and peace-loving. True wisdom, on the other hand, will never bring confusion.

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure. Verse 17a. God's wisdom is primarily not orthodox but pure.

And whenever what we say and do is not pure, then it is not from heaven and is a mere earthly spiritual cleverness. God's wisdom is also peace-loving. Verse 17b.

Alan Redpath says that when you know you are not controlled by the spirit, when you know you are a little upset, then just do not open your mouth. I like the way that he puts it. At that moment, literally force yourself back into the will of God.

Force yourself back into the will of God and then speak. But never open your mouth when you are not controlled by the spirit. For no matter how hard you try, you will never speak with true wisdom.

How many times have you hurt someone because you spoke too soon? Husbands and wives, how many times have you hurt your partner because you did not keep quiet a few minutes longer, until you were in

control of your tongue? I have lost count of the number of times I could have kicked myself just because I did not wait a little longer before I spoke. James reminds us the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure, then peace-loving, then considerate. Considerate, wisdom, gentle, the King James Version says.

I wish many young people would study this verse. It is easy to be a keen Christian when you are young, and we are grateful for that. When you are young and energetic, it seems that the world is just waiting to be conquered in the name of Jesus Christ.

You cannot imagine why it has taken so long. But when we reach the age of thirty or thirty-five, or after the first child has arrived, suddenly it becomes a bit harder to raise the enthusiasm for yet another outreach or yet another meeting. Suddenly, we are a bit more understanding of others, and a bit slower to condemn them for their apathy.

Finally, we have to admit that so often we have been working in the energy of our own nature, youthful energy, youthful enthusiasm. But where was the gentleness that should have gone into that energy? Remember the wisdom that comes from heaven is always considerate of others. How do you respond? God's wisdom is also submissive.

Now, this is an emotive word. Does the Bible mean we should be some kind of doormat for others to step on? Certainly not. In fact, when you look a little bit more deeply into the meaning of this word, you find that it could have been translated easily persuaded.

So, submissive in this context means that we should not be stubborn when we are wrong, but we should be easily taught and corrected. How do you respond when, for instance, you are helping to make tea after a church meeting, and someone says, oh, you shouldn't have used that water, it wasn't really boiling, pour it out and start again. And why have you used these teaspoons? We always use the ones in this box.

Are you willing to be corrected? Or what if you've been playing the guitar for your music group in the morning service, and someone comes up to you and says that chorus you were playing at the beginning was much too slow, and I don't like the one we finished with, it's too noisy for the older people, and the way you were standing was all wrong, we couldn't see your face at the back. What would you say? You need to be close to the Lord to accept criticism, however well-meaning it may be. I believe that one of the greatest tests in the Christian life comes when we are confronted with correction and criticism.

When we are criticized rightly or wrongly, then we must learn to lean not on other people's opinion of our work, but only on Jesus. Possibly, that is why God sometimes allows the props to be knocked from under us, and puts us under fire in the form of criticism. We need to learn to work only for His well-done good and faithful servant.

This passage gives some other ways to test true wisdom. Next, James says, The wisdom that comes from heaven is full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere, full of mercy towards those who are weak, those who are insecure, those who have done wrong, full of mercy and full of the fruit of the Spirit. It is impartial and sincere, without hypocrisy.

This is true biblical teaching, truly orthodox belief. And I pray that if anyone can show me that this is wrong thinking, or that I am misinterpreting the New Testament, and that it is possible for me to understand the Bible without peace, purity, gentleness, and so on, that they will show me. But please do not try to tell me that some Christian you know has a good understanding of the Bible, but a miserable, loveless life,

because I just will not believe you.

Biblical teaching and true, God-given wisdom always come with a Bible-linked life. An all-true Christian work will reflect this partnership of biblical teaching and biblical living. Explosive message.

Perhaps the clearest explanation of what is meant by the revolution of love is found in 1 John 3. This letter is so loaded with revolution and dynamite, that if taken seriously, it makes the writings of Karl Marx look like a damp scrib. I will never forget a young red-hot communist who came into our Operation Mobilization office in the north of England many years ago. We read this letter with him and showed him the teachings of Jesus, and two weeks later, he got down on his knees in the kitchen and gave his life to Christ.

I tell you, the message of 1 John could have been written yesterday, so relevant is it to today's generation. Now let's see what God says to us through 1 John 3.11. This is the message you heard from the beginning. We should love one another.

What are we as Christians trying to get over to people? Sometimes it seems that our first message is believe. Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. Believe in the Lord Jesus and afterwards everything will be fine.

But when I read the word believe in the New Testament, I find something that is like an atomic bomb. When a man really believes in Jesus Christ, it is a revolution becoming operative, a revolution of love. You cannot separate the one from the other.

We know that true belief must include repentance. But what does repent and believe really mean? Does salvation come when we first believe, or only when we have shown God the evidence of our changed lives? The Bible teaches clearly that salvation comes through faith alone. But real belief brings revolution.

It results in a changed life. There is no such thing as real belief which does not change the believer. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

Doing good will never save you, no matter how hard or long you work, or how much you achieve. But when you have believed, you are going to do good as a result, because the Holy Spirit, who lives in you as a Christian, wants to do good through you. Many years ago, when the gifts of the Holy Spirit were not talked about in most churches as freely as they are now, a friend came to me with stories of wonderful experiences some people had had in the Holy Spirit.

I had to admit that I was a bit sceptical. I asked her, when the Holy Spirit works in such a mighty way, shouldn't the people who have had such experience afterwards be filled with love and joy and peace? Shouldn't they leave everything they have for Christ's sake, as we are told the early Christians did in the book of Acts? Shouldn't they even be willing to lay down their lives for others? Now I think my friend knew perfectly well that not all the people who had had these experiences in the Spirit show the evidence of a revolution of love in their lives, and that some Christians who did show this evidence had never had this sort of experience. So she said to me, sometimes the Holy Spirit comes just to give us joy and a wonderful experience of blessing.

I said to her, you mean that sometimes the Holy Spirit comes apart from His Holiness? She had no answer to that. I strongly believe that all Christians should seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit, but I tell you, the Holy Spirit does not come apart from His Holiness. The emphasis is not on Spirit but on Holy, and He cannot divide up His gifts and His character.

Therefore, it is possible to measure people's true depth of experience with the Spirit, although it would be more correct to say the Spirit's experience with people, by the way that they live day by day. You cannot separate the word believe in its biblical context from the word love. Don't try.

How many men are there in our churches, leaders some of them, who speak to a congregation from the word of God, but in their homes know nothing more about loving their wives than the man in the next house, who cannot stand his. And they go on and on, continuing to think that they are spiritual men, with just a besetting sin of not being able to really love their wives. I find this absolutely heartbreaking.

To me, it is completely incompatible to say that you are a spiritual person, and then not be able to get on with your family, or even your neighbor. If your besetting sin is that you cannot love people, you are in serious trouble. I do not mean to say that it will always be easy to love people, or that you will not have battles about it.

In fact, you will find that the devil will fight you tooth and nail in this area, often 24 hours a day. But this should not discourage you, for the word of God clearly teaches that we are to love one another. We cannot have fellowship with God, without having fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

We cannot love God, without first loving our fellow Christians. Look at 1 John 4 verse 20. If anyone says, I love God, yet hates his brother, he is a liar.

For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. The popular idea today seems to be that if we love God enough, we will eventually love our brothers and sisters in Christ. But this is not what the verse says.

It states clearly that if there is any brother or any sister who we do not love actively, operationally, then our relationship with God is seriously wrong. I am convinced that many of our prayers do not get any higher than the ceiling because of our lack of love and hardness of heart. If some of the prayers we hear in prayer meetings today were being answered, the world would have been evangelized long ago.

Fantastic things are asked of God. Lord, we claim this country for you. We believe, Father, that you will open a way into China.

Lord, we trust you to bring a hundred new people to the meeting tonight. And on and on we go, and yet all the time there are other Christians in the same prayer meeting whom we cannot stand. Oh, not that we don't love them.

We would just rather not sit next to them. Of course we don't hate them. It is just that our personalities conflict.

Love your enemies. There are dozens of watered-down phrases for not loving other people. Oh, I love him in the Lord, but I don't like his mannerisms.

Susie is all right, but she is so hard to get to know. So-and-so has emotional problems, and such-and-such comes from such a difficult background. In the sight of God, it is all hypocrisy.

God never said in the Bible, love your brother if he is a keen Christian, well-dressed, and a good evangelist, and if he gets on with you. No, in fact, Christ told us in the Sermon on the Mount that real love does not begin until we love our enemies. This whole concept of loving our enemies is, for the average

person of today, nothing but an outdated theological phrase, so impossible for human nature to attain that it is often not taken seriously even among Christians.

We know so little of it, so little of really loving people who cannot tolerate us, who speak evil of us, spite us, do not like us, or the way that we operate. Christians who live in cultures that are opposed to all Christian work, and often all foreigners, must learn the hard way what loving their enemies really means, if they are to go on loving even those who persecute them for Christ's sake. Meanwhile, we in the West often cannot love even the people around us who do us no harm at all.

Some time ago, someone told me flatly that he loved everybody. I said to him, I find that hard to believe, but he was insistent that he loved everybody. Now, I happen to know of at least one person to whom he didn't bother to say hello in the morning.

He could pass this person several times a day, never showing kindness, not a smile, so I mentioned this person's name and asked, do you really love him? He said, of course I do. Well, I mean, I love all the believers. It was all in the head.

There is no love without action. Potentially, that Christian may have loved everybody. Theoretically, he may have loved everybody, but it was not a reality.

God's work. Who is it that brings about this revolution of love? When you became a Christian, the Holy Spirit of God came to live within you, with all his potential for this tremendous life of love. The Holy Spirit is there, just waiting to take possession of you and make you more loving.

He is just waiting to move you, to volunteer, to do some shopping for the older people in your church, or to help clean out the gutters. But what happens? Our pride, stubbornness, and self-centeredness soon get in the way and stop the action of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Jesus Christ said, love your neighbor as yourself.

Now, it's very nice that we Christians have been given the truth, but what has been the result in the practical realm? What has it been in India, for instance? Certain missionaries went with their heads in the clouds, taught, love your neighbor as yourself, but then shut themselves away from the people in their missionary compounds, and put locks on all the doors. And in Africa, what have been the results? Well, in many places, the missionaries have said, we love our neighbor as ourselves, but, well, the colored people had better use the back doors, and clean the houses, and be the nannies for the little white children. What, then, does all this talk about love really mean? Love your neighbor as yourself.

Well, how do you love yourself? How did you love yourself this morning? You got out of bed, groggily, wiped all the sleep out of your eyes, went to the mirror, and said, oh, how I love you, you are so wonderful, I love you, I love you, I love you so much. Did you? Well, if you do that too many mornings, someone might call in a psychiatrist for you. That is not the way that we love ourselves.

That is the way that we love our neighbors. The Lord bless you, dear brother, yes, yes, the Lord bless you. The Lord do wonderful things for you.

We sign our letters, loving Christ, and think, well, that's another one out of the way. But that is not the way that we love ourselves. Perhaps we can understand love better if we use the word care.

You have been caring for yourself all day long, ever since this morning when you woke up and your self-love automatically went into action. You had a wash, maybe used a few creams and lotions, and put on the proper amount of clothes to keep your body warm. Shortly after getting out of bed you had a little pain in your stomach, very slight, but enough to get you into action.

Immediately you started towards the kettle and the cereals and bread and jam. If you are really honest you will probably have to say that as you came to the table you were not wondering if you could make some coffee or tea for anyone else, or if you could make a start on the washing up. No, you sat down, and noticing that there was no margarine on the table, you began to look for some in the fridge.

You were taking care of yourself automatically. I am not saying that this is wrong, neither does Jesus. It is wonderful that Jesus knows all about us, all about the human mind.

If we could only grasp this truth we could burn most of the psychiatry books in a big garbage can. God doesn't say that you should not love yourself, but he does say that you should love your neighbour in the same way as you love yourself. He does not say that you should not have breakfast, but he does say that you should be concerned about your neighbour's breakfast as well.

I pray that the Spirit of God will show you what this revolution of love really is, what it means to obey the command of Jesus Christ to love your neighbour from the time you get up in the morning until you go to bed at night. Only this will make an impact on such a materialistic age as this one. Our books and leaflets will not do it.

Our Bibles will not do it. Jesus said all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another, not if you know all about the Bible and are fired with great enthusiasm. No, they will know it if you love one another.

This is the greatest challenge in the word of God, to love people as Christ loved them, to love them as we love ourselves, to care for people as we care for ourselves, surrendering everything. The only logical outcome of such love is to surrender everything to God. I believe that when someone falls in love with Jesus, it can be compared in some ways to a young man falling in love with a girl he has dreamed about all his life.

The day that they are married, he transfers his bank account and puts it into her name, and he takes out an insurance policy in her name. In other words, because he loves her, he gives her all he has. A lot of Christians have trouble with this sort of teaching.

Anything that involves money or possessions is very sensitive, and I do not want to judge or condemn anybody. Christians have very different ideas about what is meant by stewardship of money and possessions and what is meant by giving up everything. One Christian will sell his home and give the money to missions or to the poor.

Another will keep a beautiful home and use it to show others the gift of hospitality. I am not saying that God cannot use your possessions for His work and for His glory once they have been surrendered to Him. But I am saying that we must first give all control of our possessions and our money to God.

I know that it is difficult. Often we hold back because we have not yet learned to trust God with our whole lives. It is easy to sing Jesus I love you and hard to hand over a bank account.

I believe often those who hold back have not yet fallen in love with Jesus Christ. Once our relationship with Him is right, we are no longer afraid of His control. Then we can lay everything at His feet.

The man who does not know the joy of giving has not yet begun to live. For it is, just as the Bible says, more blessed to give than to receive. It is a revolutionary principle of life that our greatest joys come from giving.

It is completely contrary to our human nature. By nature we grasp everything to ourselves and we become the center. But when we become Christ-centered, it is just like a centrifugal force, like a whirlwind, throwing everything outward and leaving Christ alone, our one supreme love.

Love your neighbor as yourself, said Jesus. And on another occasion He illustrated in the parable of the Good Samaritan who He meant by our neighbor and what He meant by love. Care for your neighbor as you care for yourself.

That is why I find it hard to eat breakfast without praying for India. Why I find it hard to take a piece of bread and a sip of tea without a pain in my heart for those who have no food. We who claim to have the truth, we evangelicals, we Bible believers, have become hardened to the needs of mankind.

In recent years, Live Aid and the Race Against Time, which are not even specifically Christian, have overtaken many Christian groups in mobilizing aid for the starving in Africa and Asia. Sometimes I feel ashamed of the complacency of Christians while these young people are making such efforts. If I asked you to distribute leaflets and promised to give you five cents a leaflet, how many leaflets would you give out? If I said I would give you \$50 cash for every person you bring to Jesus Christ, maybe you would be motivated to go out and tell others about the gospel a little more.

Is this really the way that we should react? We all know it is not. No one can put a value on a soul. We need to see where we are before God.

Look at 1 John 3 verse 14. We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.

That is quite blunt, isn't it? You say, oh, but I have been born again. But how were you born again? Putting your hand up in a gospel meeting did not make you born again. Saying, Jesus, I believe in you did not make you born again.

You were only born again and freed from spiritual death when you repented of your former lack of love and trusted in Jesus to give you his Holy Spirit to produce his fruit of love in your heart for your brothers and sisters. There are many people in our churches today who have made so-called decisions at some time in their lives, who have claimed to be Christians for many years and yet have never showed any evidence of repentance and whose lives are filled with a bitterness and a lack of love towards other Christians. This is a delusion, the largest, most detestable sugar-coated pill the devil ever gave out.

There is no conversion without revolution. There is no conversion that does not produce the seed of a loving life, tiny though it be in the beginning. Look at verse 16.

This is how we know what love is. Jesus Christ laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. This is how we know God loves us.

This is how we know the love of God, the way that we perceive it, the way that we understand it. He laid down his life for us. He died for us.

He did something. He did not sit up in glory and sing, my earthlings, I love you, I know you are mine. He did not do that.

That is what we do. We sit in our meetings and sing, my Jesus, I love you, and yet often are not on speaking terms with the man in the seat beside us. Anyone who can sing that without going out from that meeting to show love in his life has passed through a religious pantomime that is an insult to almighty God, and I am convinced that the world will never be evangelized unless we experience the love of God in our hearts towards others.

Now, I am not going to give you some sort of list of steps to take so that you can experience the love of God. There are no shortcuts in the Christian life. I am not going to tell you about some new gift or prayer, style, or experience that will lead you closer to God.

These things have their place, but the first step to being filled with God's love is to want it. Want to be like Jesus. Want to know this life-changing love.

Want him with a spiritual hunger that will get you so absolutely starved for God that eventually through knowing him, his love will be poured out into your life. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Matthew chapter 5 verse 6. It is a universal law that when you want something badly, whether it is good or bad, if you continue to crave that thing, desire for it will take hold of your subconscious mind and eventually you will be motivated to get it.

How many times has it happened that someone has asked you the name of a person and you have said, I have his name right here on the tip of my tongue, now what is it? You were motivated to want to know that name. You tried again, what is that person's name? And again, now what is his name? And then you forgot about it for a while. You thought you had forgotten about it, but you had fed a wish into your inner being, into your subconscious mind, and the wheels started going.

Ten minutes later, completely without conscious effort, what came into your mind? The person's name. This hunger, this deep craving, can be used for evil as well as for good. Many years ago, a young university student in Texas called Charles Whitman went up into a tower on the university campus one day and began to shoot people at random.

This thought had come into his mind many times before. He had even mentioned it to his psychiatrist. But I am sure that the first time it occurred to him, he was shocked and thought, I could never do anything like that.

Nevertheless, the thought continued to come to him more and more frequently. He suppressed it and suppressed it until finally it took possession of him totally, and he was powerless against his craving. This is what happens when you crave something.

Every time you want something that is not of God, you sow a thought. Maybe you have had a desire you wouldn't admit to your best friend or your husband or wife. Maybe it is new clothes.

Maybe it is marriage. Maybe it is recognition. Perhaps it is even something legitimate if God were to give it to you.

But the craving is so strong in you that you begin to think, other people have it. And the seed of envy is sown in your heart. And then you think, why can't I have it? And the seed of bitterness is sown.

Probably all of us have had thoughts like that at one time or another. But remember, if you go on allowing these thoughts to have possession of your heart and mind, they will take control of you. Soon, the things of God will start to mean less and less to you.

And in the end, God may let you have your desire, but at what price? Brokenness. In the same way, I am convinced that if you want a life of love, if you want to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, if you want to join that remnant of people who are fed up with words, hymns, and hypocrisy, if you want reality and revolution in your life, then you will get it. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

It will take time. Perhaps you have heard this before, and you say, last year I heard a message like this, and I prayed and wept and rededicated myself before God. I said, Lord, I want to be loving, I want to be humble, I want to be gentle, I want to be a servant.

And now, you look back at the past year, and it is not very impressive. Do not be discouraged. What God wants of us is brokenness.

He wants us to realize that in our own nature, we cannot please Him, that we cannot love our brothers and sisters, that from the time we get up in the morning until we go to bed at night, we live a life of utter selfishness, except when God interrupts us. Do you want this? Do you want to know something of loving your enemies? Do you want to know something of being a servant? Something of being easily taught and corrected? Of weeping for people who are without food and without Christ? I will never forget a one-day campaign we had in Bombay, when we were challenged to distribute half a million Christian leaflets in one day. After we had distributed some 400,000 leaflets throughout the day, we then had a meeting in the evening, and as we closed that meeting, we said that if anyone was motivated to go back into the streets with leaflets, we still had a few left--about 100,000.

There were several volunteers. I had absolutely no desire to go out that night with more leaflets. It was 11 p.m. We had started the day at 5 a.m., and I had worked through the night before on the maps of the city.

I was tired. I did not feel any love tingling through me, and as I started out, I just had to stop where I was and turn my eyes towards Jesus. I saw Him walking an extra mile for me.

I saw Him going up Calvary's hill to the cross for me. That was love. It was action, and I said to myself that if Jesus could go an extra mile for me, then surely He would help me go the extra mile for those others whom He loved.

Love is action. If you love me, keep my commandments. We went out into the streets of Bombay again, and around midnight I could see for about a quarter of a mile in front of us thousands of men and women sleeping on the pavement.

I have never before seen such a sight in my life. I had two big bags filled with leaflets, and for the first time in my life I went from bed to bed giving out leaflets. This world in which we live is a sick world.

It is a world of misery and tragedy such as most of us cannot begin to imagine. Millions are sleeping on pavements, starving to death, knowing nothing of the love of God for them. The church sings, My Jesus, I

love you, and at the same time a couple of thousand of people a day slip away into eternity.

And we say that we love them. I say we don't. If we loved them with Christ's love, we wouldn't stop until we had sold a million books and distributed a hundred million leaflets and laid down our lives in every kind of service and action to help them.

And as we did, our tears would bathe these lost souls. I know too little about it. I have wept little over souls and much over my unloving heart.

But I can say right now before God, I want it. You can take all that I have. You can take my family.

And I do not say this lightly, but I want a life of love. I want God. If you can say this with me, I believe that God will answer you.

But if what you want is not God, but Christian service, Christian activity, or Christian fellowship, no matter how good these things may be, then I do not believe you will ever be truly satisfied. Lord, we cry to you to teach us to love, to break us of our self-pride, stubbornness, that the love of Christ poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit might be operative daily, hourly, moment by moment. We cry to you to teach us to love our enemies, to love our critics, not in word, but in deed also.

We cry to you that we want this life of love, and we want you, for you are love. Amen. Chapter 2 Spiritual Balance Learning about the revolution of love is something that is essential for all Christians, whether they have been following the Lord for five days or fifty years.

Learning about the principles of spiritual balance is part of growing up as a Christian, moving towards spiritual maturity. In spiritual balance, biblical passages that give different aspects of the truth are kept together, not being watered down, but seen in context and in the perspective of God's whole revelation. Spiritual balance, like spiritual revolution, is something that must be real for each one of us.

If we only understand the principles of it in our heads, then our discipleship will not withstand the test of time and suffering. I am completely convinced that discipleship is not just for full-time Christian workers. Discipleship is for every believer.

Discipleship is not just for people who are living in a Christian community or a Bible college. It is for believers everywhere. Discipleship is not a set of rigid rules.

The principles of discipleship are more flexible and adaptable than many of us would dare to admit. The unreal expectations of a few Bible verses taken out of context can lead people into spiritual frustration. Only by balancing one strong biblical truth with another will we come to spiritual reality.

Flexibility The first area of conflict which often arises with keen, young Christians is that of flexibility. How much to try to convince others of the great teaching they may have received, or the great experiences that they have had, or how much simply to accept all Christians as they are. This is a conflict that may appear when young Christians have been for the first period of training with Operation Mobilization, or their first term with a college Christian union, or their first Bible conference.

Naturally they may come back brimming with ideas to their home churches and begin to tell much older Christians just where they have been going wrong and how they should change, and just as naturally the older Christians may react with some resentment. This is a situation in which the need for balance is

obvious. It is good for young Christians to have strong beliefs and to be constantly learning and sharing what they have learned, but what happens when others are not so keen to listen? As disciples of Christ our chief role must always be love, and love brings with it sensitivity to the needs of others.

When we are in a church meeting or committee and we find ourselves disagreeing violently about some matter of priorities, or finance, or church politics, and we feel the anger welling up within us, love restrains us. Love causes us to think before we speak. Most of us realize our tongues run faster than our brains, and that this can get us into trouble.

True disciples are adaptable and flexible, although they do not compromise their beliefs. If you spend time working with any Christian group, you may find that you build up strong convictions on minor issues, just because that is the way that the group does things. But if you then go on to join another group or return to work in your local church, you may find they have different convictions on these points, or that they do not consider these things important.

This can become very frustrating, and may place a barrier between you and your new area of work and Christian service, unless your attitude is one of spiritual balance. Unless you are flexible, adaptable, and loving, you will not be able to fit into another fellowship easily. There is nothing wrong with having strong convictions, so long as we remember that we are still learners.

A humble attitude will stop us thinking that we have the answers to every situation, and make us flexible to the convictions of others. God uses men of completely opposite convictions. There is one man of God who visited us on the MV Logos once to do some preaching, and during his sermon smoked a pipe all the time.

Now this is something that most of us involved in OM would find completely unacceptable. Yet, although he believes and acts differently to us, he is a man who is being wonderfully used of God. God is so great and so mighty that he will always carry on the work of his kingdom, and he will use people despite their mistakes, weaknesses, and even wrong ideas and minor beliefs.

Sometimes we will have to say, others may, I will not. This is very different to saying, I will not, so no one else will either, which is using our own weakness to judge and condemn others. Work and Rest Another area in which Christians often have had great difficulty is the need to strike a balance between working as hard as possible, and yet leaving time to be relaxed and rested.

The importance of relaxation is becoming more recognized today. There have been too many Christians, especially leaders, whose ministry or families have collapsed under the strain simply because they never learned to relax. Some Christians think that there is too much to do to relax, that if they are truly disciplined they should be able to work all the time.

But this is not the way that God has made us. A time of relaxation helps us to build up our physical, emotional, and spiritual strength and power so that we can then go on to accomplish more in a week than we would otherwise have done in a month. Different people relax in different ways.

Some people need complete separation from work to relax. Some need a week's holiday every so often. Others can just take off for a few hours, while others can just change from one sort of work to another.

Some people's attitude to work is so much more relaxed from the start that they never become so uptight as some others. We need to realize that it is God who is in charge and that we are not indispensable. When we can trust God enough to relax, we will become more, not less, disciplined.

It is easy to produce a false discipline, working ceaselessly and being present at every meeting just to impress others. This sort of attitude should never be encouraged. God who looks at the heart knows whether our work is first of all for him or for other people.

It is self-discipline that will last, not some discipline that is imposed by others. Of course there are times when we need to accept the discipline of the church or the community. This is only part of our own self-discipline.

And of course there will be times when we fail and fall short of our own standards. But I know of no better way of learning than through failure. Concern and inner peace.

To be able to learn through failure takes another area of balance. The ability to balance concern and inner peace. It is good to be concerned that things are done in the right way and that people are living in the right way.

But it is not good to have an unhealthy anxiety. If we know that we are working with God and that he is in control, it is possible to have peace within ourselves when other things are going wrong. Without an inner compulsion to get things done in the best possible way, many Christian leaders would not achieve what they do for God.

But that compulsion must not become an obsession. It must be kept under God's control. If we do not learn to have inner peace when things go wrong, we will become impatient with those around us.

Look instead at how the Lord Jesus dealt with his stumbling, fumbling disciples. They said and did many stupid things, but he did not become impatient with them but forgave them everything. Perfection through failure.

When we learn to have inner peace because we know we are completing God's own Son, we will be able to obtain a balance between aiming at perfection and coping with failure. To be perfect should be the aim of every true Christian. To live a life in the Spirit, not to offend anyone, to love everyone as Christ loves us, to do all things in the right way and to glorify God in our every action.

But each of us must also learn to accept failure, especially our own failures, mistakes and shortcomings. We must know what to do when we fail. Wallowing in repentance that is mostly made up of self-pity is not the answer, for it merely paralyzes our effectiveness.

We refuse to get on with the work of God, imprisoning ourselves in our own self-imposed purgatory while the devil chuckles with delight. Avoiding failure is not the answer either. Many Christians are so afraid of failure that they simply lower their aims.

We won't have a prayer meeting in case nobody comes. We handed out leaflets last year and someone laughed at us, so we won't do it again. To be afraid of failure in this way is to dishonor God.

Fred Jarvis has said the greatest sin of Christians is not failure but aiming too low. We must not try to diminish God by our own lack of faith. We must have high aims but be able to accept our own failure.

Some Christians tend towards a perfectionistic attitude and may have impossibly high aims for themselves while worrying over every slip and fall. Others will simply avoid failure by compromising and lowering their aims so that they achieve nothing at all for God. The difference is often not one of spirituality but of

temperament.

The only answer is to have a spiritual balance. Sometimes Christians live a whole day in frustration because they were unable to get to their quiet time first thing in the morning. They rarely believe that the devil is going to pounce on them extra hard.

Actually the Bible does not even mention having a quiet time. The devil is going to attack us anyway whether we miss our quiet time or not. Let us aim for perfection but not become obsessive over it.

We must learn to handle our mistakes. Sometimes our expectations are unreal. With young people who have not had much experience in Christian work but who have read inspiring Christian books and have been to impressive Bible conferences there are bound to be disappointments and frustrations.

These things are a normal part of the Christian life particularly in a group situation. We should learn to take Christian biographies with a pinch of salt. They are often so concerned to tell us all about this great man or woman of God that they select only the good points leaving out the difficulties and weak points.

This is particularly true of books written some years ago. The impression given is of a life free from any mistakes and failure and this can be very discouraging to young people who then find that the Christian life is not quite like that. The inner history of many missions and societies is not always pleasant and inspiring.

Some of the greatest men and women of God had amazing inconsistencies and weaknesses but God used them despite their mistakes for in Christ he made them perfect. In 1st Corinthians we read about the unspiritual Christians in the New Testament. Yet Paul opens his letter by saying he is writing to those who are sanctified.

It is clear from the letter that some of these people were living in sexual sin and doing all kinds of things against God. But the apostle Paul knew how to handle people's failures. He encouraged them to keep aiming for perfection but he always showed them how to pick themselves up and keep going when they failed.

This balance is the only way to achieve spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity. There is a lot of spiritual immaturity in the Christian world in the realm of material possessions.

It is amazing how easily we get the I want bug just because we see that someone else has something and not because we need it. Generally if we really need something God will give it to us. But often it is only when we see somebody else with something that we suddenly realize we want it as well.

We may start to envy someone else's food or clothes or music system. This is not genuine need it is simply jealousy. God's way is much more revolutionary than the materialistic way of life that we are used to.

The apostle Paul lived this out. He chose to go without some things that other Christians thought were essential. Don't base your spiritual life on even the most dedicated Christian you know.

Base it instead on the word of God and what the Lord Jesus reveals to you. Perhaps the Lord has shown you things that you should not do such as drink alcohol or spend money on luxury items. Then you meet some apparently mature Christians who are things.

This can be most upsetting and you may begin to wonder if you are right to obey God. Firstly remember that these Christians may not be as spiritually mature as they appear. Often people with strong outgoing personalities gain reputations as keen Christians when in reality they are depending on natural ability rather than a close knowledge of God.

Secondly remember that we all have strengths and weaknesses in different areas. Just because these Christians have a weakness in this particular area does not mean that they are not strong in other areas. In fact some Christians are able to stay close to God while doing some things that for most of us would cause problems.

We must not judge others but must obey what God shows us about the way to run our own lives. Let us beware of getting worked up by the way that people spend money. This is always a sensitive area.

There are some people who will spend more money in one week for a hotel room and food than some of us would spend in a month. Yet God is using them. How can this happen? It can happen because God is sovereign.

God is great. God is a God of mercy and he looks upon our hearts. Let us look to God and live our lives the way he shows us being able to say others may I cannot.

This is the sign of true spiritual maturity. Spiritual balance. Learning about spiritual balance enables us to learn to distinguish the difference between what is biblical principle and what is personal conviction.

It is possible to find a bible verse to support almost anything but only if you're willing to take isolated bible verses out of context. Certain things we do in life do not come directly from biblical principles. The larger principle of love guides us to do things in the most convenient and practical way.

If we are spiritually mature we can accept this even if it means things are not always done in the way that we would prefer. Having a balanced attitude to important biblical principles leads us from spiritual immaturity to maturity, from frustration to fulfillment. Only when we learn to be adaptable yet strong in our beliefs, to work hard yet to relax in God and to aim at perfection through failure will we become effective and used by God.

Lord teach us about spiritual balance. Let us not look to others for our example but to you alone. Learning to follow your word not just the passages that we have selected to suit our own abilities or temperament but in its glorious and complete whole.

Amen.

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