

PART ONE

The Context of the Creation

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Chapter One

The Revealed Heart of God

*God cares more about you loving Him,
than He cares about you obeying Him.*

Getting Back to Our First Love

This book is about rekindling the christian's fire of love for Jesus and our fellow man. I present God as He has revealed Himself to me. My understanding may not encompass all His wonderfulness but what He has revealed to me is truly remarkable. He has revealed to me what He desires most from christian brothers and sisters; for them to love Him personally with all their heart, soul, mind and strength; and second, love their neighbor as themselves. Presently, people believe what He desires most is for godly men to make disciples. This is the wrong focus.

Some ask, "How does a sovereign God administer His love?" That is a very difficult question, and some believers, because of their Calvinist theology, must be intellectually honest, and answer that question. I suggest that a better question is, "How does a loving God administer His sovereignty?" The difference between these two questions, is the difference between two or more distinctly different theologies. It is the theology we hold, at whatever level of knowledge, which influences our thinking, and hence, our closeness to Jesus. God honors and blesses faith which is true to the Scriptures. One's theology, although it is derived from the Scripture, isn't necessarily the one God intended. We see, in fact, at least two distinctly different theologies; Calvinism and Arminianism, which both purport to be truth. They both can't be right because God only has one message. He

has the message of Jesus Christ. However, good christian men disagree on what that message specifically says. I personally believe there is a **third message**, a variation on Arminianism, one which fits the scripture better than either of those popular views. I am saying there is another way to view the Scriptures, in a systematic way, which yields a closer, more precise view of the heart of God.

The problem, which the church at large faces, is that christians are having little to no effect on our society. Men like Reggie McNeal, in his book, "The Present Future," have talked about this problem of an impotent christianity. He believes church leaders must think differently about how christians "do church." I agree, but I believe there is more to the problem than just changing how we "do church." I believe we must change our theology; to a theology which better aligns with the theology which Jesus actually practiced. That is; a biblical theology which better describes and uplifts the values of the heart of God.

Before I get into what specifically should be different, I want to give you a scenario, which I experienced, that demonstrates what I perceive as the real heart of God in action.

My Encounter With Jesus

In 2005, my good friend Bob, asked me to go to a men's retreat with him. He wouldn't tell me too much about the weekend, although

he was not being secretive. He was willing to sponsor me 100% but I still didn't know if I wanted to take the chance. Our friendship and my knowing that he was a solid christian, told me that if he said it was life changing, I should go. So I did, and it was one of the greatest and most rewarding christian experiences of my life.

I live in the East of Phoenix, Arizona, and he lives on the North side, so we met at the send-off point. Right away, I noticed people took my luggage; tagged the bags and put them on the bus. We had a nice potluck dinner, and the leader welcomed about twenty of us first-timers to the weekend. The leader introduced each man, by name, as he came up to the front to be recognized. After the reading of each name, as each strode up, there was great applause of approval bestowed. That was unusual I thought; but pleasant. We then boarded the tour bus to the cheers, wild clapping and other sounds of rejoicing. It continued until the bus pulled out. The ride to the camp, near Prescott, was uneventful but I met somebody sitting next to me. We talked a little on the two and one-half hour ride but most people were quiet and somewhat apprehensive about what we were getting into.

Upon arrival, we were greeted by probably forty or so team members cheering wildly and whistling with obvious gladness to see us. The team supports the men who experience this weekend for the first time. We got off the bus, and went into a room where coffee, cool drinks, and cookies were being served. Meanwhile, many of the team were unloading the baggage from the bus and stowing the gear in our assigned bunk area. Some team members were socializing with the "first timers" and getting to know them. It was hard to believe they were treating us so well.

After a time, we were led up to the chapel. As we sat down, we could see at the front of the room, a big cross, 6" x 6" beams and seven feet or so tall. It had a red satin drape symbolizing the presence of Jesus. One of the leaders gave a talk on "why are you here?" He asked that we think about our personal walk with Jesus, afterwards asking for introspective contemplation

and silence. The silence was to last until chapel the next morning. Everyone walked solemnly back to the dorm and went to bed; accompanied by silence.

The next morning, at 6:00 AM, we were quietly aroused and softly instructed to get dressed and ready for chapel. The team lined the walkway, spaced some ten feet apart, between the dorm and chapel buildings. They would do that every time the group moved between buildings. This symbolized the protection of God in our movements.

Chapel was a time of meditation. One of the leaders read the story of the three glances of Jesus toward Peter on the night of His betrayal, where Peter denied Him three times (Luke 22). The story ripped at my heart, knowing I had denied Him at times in my own life. We had communion; a time to think about Jesus dieing for our sins. We then had a time of worship where a man led us into a time to appreciate Jesus in a contemplative mood of song. It was wonderful to worship that early in the morning.

One wonderful brother, short, bald headed with a beard, who looks very jewish, sounded a rams horn. He explained that in the Old Testament, the shofar was sounded whenever Israel needed God's power to overcome (Neh.4:20). Now, this man sounds the shofar to ask God to overcome sin and bring love and healing to our group. After the shofar is sounded, everyone shouts with a great shout, "Hallelujah !!!" This was repeated whenever a significant event took place.

Afterward, we went for a group picture, hearty breakfast, and thence to a room set up with tables seating six men each. Each table had an attendant whose job was to get soft drinks, coffee or any other needed thing for everyone at the table. They were delighted to keep everyone at their table supplied. All weekend, while in this room for instruction and worship, the table waiters served us with everything. They waited on us hand and foot.

Each man introduced himself, saying his, and his spouses name, where they go to church, and their favorite vacation spot. Table assignments were made with each man having his

place.

We were all dressed very casually in levi's, sweat shirts and so, but when the first instructional speaker came in, he was wearing a suit, white shirt and tie; with a small red carnation boutonniere. He looked very pastoral. He was a team member who has worked, off and on, for three months getting ready for this weekend.

The team has Saturday meetings where they bond as team, practicing their talks, getting organized, praying, worshipping, fellowshiping and sharing meals together. There is great preparation made to bless the first-timers.

Just before the talk, in a prayer room, four or more men pray with the speaker to ask God's blessing on the talk, and that God will open the ears of all who hear.

As the speaker starts, a prayer of meditation is read by all, and a candle lit to symbolize the presence of the Holy Spirit. Many of the instructional talks involve the personal testimony of how the speaker came to know the Lord, or how the topic was involved in the speaker's life. Some of the testimonies are exciting and truly exceptional; one man shared that he was a hit man (professional assassin) for the mexican mafia, and how God saved him out of that terrible life. After each talk, the speaker went back to a special prayer room where the same prayer group thanked the Lord for words said, concepts heard and the Holy Spirit experienced.

The rest of the day was spent listening to talks given on various subjects. The talks were interspersed with worship and dinner. Friday evening at chapel, after worship and communion, there was a special time where the team members washed the feet of the first-timers. Men washing the feet of other men; a tremendous gesture of love and devotion. Many said that the foot washing was the most meaningful part of the weekend. The team who served, like Jesus, humbled themselves to wash the feet of their first-time brothers. This act of love was communicated clearly. This is how the love of Jesus is seen in its wonderful simplicity.

The support team was a ratio of two team

members to one first-timer. They did everything for the first-timers. At meals, the team fetched food and removed trays, as well as cleaned up after. The team served the first-timers in everything; all three days.

The second and third days were similar. Each filled with worship, instruction, service, and devotion in the most humble of circumstances. Jesus was among the people, and we felt Him, because the whole time was devoted to activities which promoted the Holy Spirit's presence and filling. There were more and better surprises, which I won't talk about, that made it unforgettable and life changing.

At the end of the weekend, all the first-timers were filled with the love of Jesus because they experienced the love and devotion of the team filled with the Spirit of God. When they arrived for the weekend, they were individuals separated unto themselves. When they left, they were unified together, one in the bond of Christ's love.

The team was by no means left out. Many team members say serving is more fulfilling than the initial experience. I agree. I have since served on team a number of times. I am amazed how one man, loving another man through Jesus, can cause him to experience God. Men experience the love of Jesus first hand. There is forgiveness of sins asked, and forgiveness of sins given. At one point, everyone is asked to write down on a small piece of paper, the sins for which they would like forgiveness. These papers are folded and nailed to a big cross. Thereafter, they are burned, symbolizing God forgetting their sins, to remember them no more. These acts are strong motivating exercises which demonstrate the mercy, grace and love of Christ. **Men get to experience God in their life!** There is a similar weekend for women also.

This kind of experience needs to permeate all christianity. This kind of mercy, grace and love needs to fill the churches of America. This kind of experience emanates from God Himself! This is what God is all about. He loves me and shows it through His Spirit. Then people who dare to believe and look, can see who God really

is to them. The one side of this experience coin is the first-timers who are blessed, which have never experienced the true love of Jesus before. For them, the reality of Jesus comes alive. They are touched to the core of their christianity. This experience is truly life changing.

The other side of this experience coin is the effect of the Holy Spirit on the team who serves. The serving experience, with manifold blessing, begets more desire for serving. Why, because serving a God which you can experience, brings reality to Jesus and the christianity which He represents. My experience serving in such ways, immeasurably increases my love for God. Because, I see God working in people's lives! He is real! He is the wonderful savior of my soul who loves me. He shows me He is completely good, and wants nothing but blessing and happiness for me, and for all who love Him. This is new life! This is the news that God wants "good" for me, through Jesus Christ. He, is the good news of the gospel which we can experience by being close to Him for a significant period of time. In this case, sixty or more men all going the same direction, at the same time; for a weekend, into the arms of Jesus. That is the heart of God in action.

What Makes this Spiritual Weekend Work?

(1.) All of the team believes that experiencing the mercy, grace, and love of Jesus Christ transforms peoples lives. This is what makes this weekend successful.

(2.) The weekend is overseen by committed christian men. There are usually three men designated as spiritual overseers who are ordained pastors. All other team members are laity. Most, if not all, the team are fully committed to Jesus Christ.

(3.) Nearly every first-timer believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. And the ones who don't, are spiritually handicapped, and thus they may not be as touched. Although those who are not believers, come to see, at least, the worth of Jesus Christ, and that the team is

committed to Him and them. Some non-believers have come to believe during the weekend. The witness that God loves them is very strong indeed.

(4.) Another major factor is the three days of time allotted to concentrated effort devoted to seeking the face of God. There is introspection of self, acknowledgement of sin, seeking of forgiveness, celebration of personal absolution, celebration of grace in communion, appreciation of Jesus' horrific sacrifice, worship of the savior, fellowship with brothers, enjoyment in knowing you spent time doing something worthwhile for the weekend, and the peace of God knowing Jesus approves you and what you did. These things are not trivial but are life changing for team and first-timer alike.

Why isn't this Type Attitude and Witness Common in Every Church?

Why aren't churches everywhere accepting and learning from this type example? In the group I am associated with, there are over thirty different congregations represented. All the team, and all the first-timers come from one of these congregations. Apparently, none of these churches, as an individual organization, accepts the premise that demonstrating the mercy, grace and love of Jesus Christ produces disciples. If they did, they would be producing disciples by the truckfull. At least, the churches would support the group to which I belong, but they don't. If we find the answer to why churches don't support these type groups, which in turn, produce such great results in peoples lives, we will also find out what needs to be changed in church thinking. There seems to be three issues that are involved.

Issue # 1

The popular forms of theology now practiced, do not approximate closely enough the theology which Jesus espoused and practiced. This has caused God to not bless the faith of the people in those churches; because God only blesses the practices of true faith; meaning that whatever is

not of true faith is sin (Rom.14:23). Blessings of true faith are: (1) new people coming to know the Lord; (2) people being built up in knowledge of the Word, and love for God, and (3) christians having a greater impact on the society for Christ in their locality. We don't see these blessings, today, to any great degree. We see the opposite; the overall shrinking of christian influence in churches and society.

If a certain theology proposes a slightly off-base view of God's heart, that off-base view produces thinking and practices which are not consistent with the original thinking and practices of Jesus. However, because a group believes his particular thinking is God's will, good men defend their beliefs. They are honest in standing up for what they believe is right and godly. This is honorable, and they *are* men after God's own heart. The problem is they may be honestly wrong in one way or another.

I see this happening in epidemic proportions all across North America. There are so many versions of theology that christianity is fragmented and divided into thousands of little churches. They all have their own versions of what God is like and what He is about.

Issue # 2

The divisions caused by differences in theology, and none of them close enough to the thinking and practices of Jesus, have caused a lack of unity in the bond of love (Col.3:14). The lack of unity in the bond of love causes people to not work together, but as individuals, if they work at all. Churches usually do not work together in a cooperative effort between congregations. This is sad because Satan's plan of divide and conquer is working.

Christians not working together in the bond of love do not produce the synergistic influence of great numbers of people working together for a righteous cause. For example, the righteous cause of a church or churches manning a booth at the local fair, where they pass out "living water" in the form of small bottles of water which remind people that Jesus loves them. The workers pass out cards which advertise the loca-

tion of their church. Another righteous cause is many christians working together to promote christian ethics in government policy. At the present time, the voice of Christ is sadly lacking in political arena of our country.

Issue # 3

That christians have left their first love (Rev. 2:4). Christians have become apathetic about their christianity. They see little excitement or enthusiasm in serving their God. This is the issue to which Reggie McNeal addressed himself. He pointed to the churches; they must do something different.

I believe this is mostly a result, not a cause. It is the result of wrong theology (issue #1), church fragmentation and the lack of unity in the bond of love (issue # 2). The lack of sufficient Godly blessing, because of issues one and two, has sapped the life out of nearly all christian people over the years. After all, it is God who gives life!

It is God who must revive His Church. God will rebuild His Church in North America, but as christians, we must cooperate in true faith. That is, faith in a message that is close enough to His original message that God will bless indeed.

With the small amount of life giving Spirit available today in our churches, it is no wonder people have left their first love. As the scripture says (Rev. 2:4-5), remember from where you have fallen and repent. More importantly, theologians and church leaders must repent, reevaluate their theology and church practices. They must change to that which the Lord Jesus Christ will bless with new converts, converts being built up in the knowledge and love of God, and the society being effected by Christ's influence. That will set the stage for individuals to return to their first love.

To What, Do We Change?

The majority of this book is devoted to answering that question. Just like Webster's Dictionary, I need to start at the beginning. But I also need to tell you where I'm going. As I have

alluded to above, the two popular theologies, Calvinism and Arminianism, do not approximate closely enough the thinking and practices of Jesus. Thus, God has not blessed the practices which their thinking represents.

Calvinism Very Generally

Calvinism, by its theology, portrays the picture that the sovereignty of God (being boss) is most important to Him. It is summed up in their statement: "The chief end of man is to glorify God." Other statements imply that God is all important and man is nothing. The theology, at the same time, by default, implies that the love of God is secondary to His sovereignty. In other words, how does a sovereign God administrate His love for mankind? Calvinism attempts to answer that question, but the answer is insufficient when Calvinists declare that God passes over those not predestined to Heaven. Thus, many people go to Hell who He has decided not to save. He **could** save them, but He does not.

How can God allow most of mankind to go to Hell when He could save them, and still say that God is love? This is grossly inconsistent. This is why Calvinism fails the test of truth. Calvinism does not represent the character values of God accurately. Calvinism says that the chief end of man is to glorify God. Scripture says the chief end of man is to love the Lord your God. Calvinism stresses sovereignty, scripture stresses love. Calvinism, as a theology, projects and exalts sovereignty as God's chief value. Thus, churches who hold to Calvinistic type theology, don't exalt love for God and neighbor. They exalt some other value if any at all. Therefore, God does not bless their efforts to any great degree because their efforts have the wrong emphasis. Lack of God's blessing allows a lack of unity in the bond of love. A lack of unity allows only individuality with little of God's blessing, and this results in what we see; the pitiful condition of christianity which is under Calvinistic influence.

Arminianism Very Generally

The Arminian doctrine of Conditional Election exalts the idea that God elects to salvation,

before the foundation of the world, the person whom He foresees, that will believe in Jesus Christ. However, in the Arminian view, as I understand it, God's sovereignty is still more important to God than is His attribute of love. If this is true, then the practical outcome with respect to godly values, imparted to churches holding Arminian theology, is the same as churches holding Calvinistic type theology. That is, love for God is not the primary mover of the church. Some other value is the primary mover, which God does not bless, which results in the same pitiful Christianity which exists under the Calvinistic influence.

Managed Cooperation Theology Very Generally

I contend that divine love is a more important attribute to God than is His being boss. In other words, how does a loving God administrate His sovereignty? One of the ways is, I believe He shares it.

God is sovereign over all; but delegates some of His sovereignty to each person. I believe the scripture teaches He has given each individual sovereignty, over that person's own life. This means that since God has given man sovereignty over his own life, God will influence, but not control, what a man does with his life. The gifting of sovereignty to mankind has both authority and responsibility connected to it.

The authority inherent in the gifted sovereignty is to be capable of loving or not loving God and others. God is love, and in order for men to love, and since we are made in the image of God, He must have given us the capacity to love. However the gift of sovereignty has a down side; many people will not choose to allow themselves to become acquainted with God and His goodness.

The responsibility inherent in the gifted sovereignty is that men start out in life biased in their thinking against God. However, if a person **allows** himself to become acquainted with God, and **cooperates** with Him to some degree, over some period of time, God the Holy Spirit, will demonstrate His mercy, grace and love in that person's life which gives the person a view

of the “goodness” of God. This is new information which the person never had before; a view of God. When an increasing amount of godly information gets to a “critical mass,” the Holy Spirit can contrast the person’s original point of view of “evil,” and the new view of God’s “goodness,” which the Holy Spirit uses to convict that God is good.

Continued cooperation with the Holy Spirit yields the perspective that one’s life is better managed by God than managed by self. This is how one comes to believe, through faith, that God is worthy to be loved. God’s worthiness to be loved will cause additional love for Himself in the individual. The reward for man loving God is God’s own desire to take the lover-of-God to Heaven.

The additional responsibility is that if you **don’t** allow yourself to become acquainted with God, and you **don’t** cooperate with Him over time, you will not be exposed to His mercy, grace and love. Since you didn’t allow the godly input, you remain ignorant of God’s mercy, grace and love. Therefore, you miss out on seeing the “goodness” of God. If you don’t see the goodness of God, you are left with your original point of view of a world that does not involve God; that is, the world of “evil.” It is only by the contrast between the “goodness” of God and the “evil” of the world, that the Holy Spirit can show you the perspective that God is “good.” Thus, you will have no perspective about the truth of God which tells you that He is worthy to be loved. That means you are willingly ignorant, and you will die in your sins. At the judgement, the reward for willing ignorance is banishment away from God forever. How extremely sad.

A Continued Overview

How a God, perfect in love, administers His sovereignty is the question which I will attempt to answer more fully in this rest of this book. And hopefully, answering this question will also tell you what to change and: to what; do we change.

When asked by the scribes in Mark 12:28-

31, “What commandment is the foremost of all?” Jesus answered, “The foremost is, ‘Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord; 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 strength.’ “The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” Since love is His foremost commandment, love is His highest calling.

For us, in our day and time, should we be loving the Lord our God and loving our neighbor like the group did in the description of my encounter with Jesus? Is that an example of God’s directive? Is that an example of the true message of Jesus? Is it possible that christianity could be as simple and direct and uncomplicated as showing a bunch of men the love of God? And the result be that they praise God, love Him and turn other men toward doing the same? Eureka!! I have found it!

The Discovery

Managed Cooperation Theology is the theology which matches the message of Jesus with the practices of Jesus. It is the theology which will allow all churches to come together because of its simplicity and conformance to scripture. The central tenet is to love God and love your neighbor. The Job of christians everywhere is to create ways to show love to God and to the people with which you come in contact. The example is doing what the group did which put on the weekend of my encounter with Jesus. That is a sample of the kind of activity that **all** christians should promote.

The Needed Theology Change

I believe the reason churches don’t do that now is their theology. The Calvinist and Arminian theologies exalt different priorities. They exalt no values, or values which are not: love God - love your neighbor. That is not to say they don’t value love at all but that those theologies don’t uplift love for God and neighbor as the number one priority. A reason for existence if you will. The other theologies view sovereignty

as a more important value to God than love. But as I have started to show, love is more important than sovereignty.

I believe that if christianity, at large, can see their way clear to reject Calvinism and Arminianism in favor of Managed Cooperation Theology, there will be a revival in North America the like of which no one has ever seen.

The Resulting Change in Churches

Over a period of time, as a more scriptural message appears, as an updated more relevant theology emerges, church leaders will consider adjusting their basic church theology.

When the theology of a church changes to Managed Cooperation, the whole focus of the church will change from doing whatever, to exercises in love of God; maybe through worship, maybe through a passion play, a thousand other ways which people create to show their love. Their focus will change to loving their neighbors through projects sponsored by the church. The church will see that God will bless, and wants them to create weekend retreats such as the one I went to in my encounter with Jesus. Churches will see results in converts.

People will be built up in the true knowledge and love of God. The result of this acting in faith to love God and love thy neighbor will be blessed by God for all society to see. Seeing God's blessing will cause the renewing of commitments of people who have left their first love. Then christianity will be renewed. Then christianity will be blessed by the loving God which wants to build His church. But He will only do so by true faith in love for God, and love for your neighbor as yourself.

It is my prayer for christianity that they lower the banner of sovereignty and raise the banner of love; love for God and neighbor. Amen.