

The Purpose of God's Love

Biblical passages unveiling
the purpose of God's love

Ivan Chamurliev

Copyright © 2023 Ivan Chamurliev

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

All Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Visit the author's website at <https://bible-meditations.my.canva.site> or contact him at ivan.chamurliev@gmail.com

Introduction

What is the purpose of God's love? Why did He send His Son to die on the cross? What do people understand about this important truth?

We need to start from the main point, our condition, the reason the Son of God left His throne and humbly came to earth to die for us. He came because we were lost. That is the reason, and this is where His love starts. The fact that people were lost and had no hope of saving themselves.

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.” (John 15:13)

Love means giving, and God showed his love for humanity by giving us a valuable gift. He gave what was most precious and important to Him – His only begotten son. He did that because we were lost. And what a great gift it is! Eternal life is something that lasts forever. We were dead in our sins with all hope lost. This gift is incomparable to any other.

The main purpose of God's love is salvation, and this love is moved with compassion toward the lost. God wants to save them from suffering and pain beyond anything they can imagine. He wants to lead them to eternal life and joy. When talking about God's love, we are referring to something that exceeds a romantic feeling, being kind, helping someone accomplish a task, or even assisting others suffering pain. It has to do with that, but its purpose is much greater, and goes beyond. It is about God's suffering for us and His plan to save us. We must understand that all compassion and all kind acts toward others are because there is a God. He has created and placed those feelings within human beings. When they don't know God, they are not moving in the right direction and don't know how to make use of those feelings in the right way. It is knowing God's truth that helps us move in the right direction, follow the right paths, and purify the motives for our actions. We are ignited by God's compassion which points to what really matters, eternity. God's love is not just about grand gestures but also includes seemingly simple acts of kindness. Still, they need to be inspired by God's compassion. Only a born-again believer can feel that. Once people have a personal relationship with Christ, they should embrace love and give of themselves to others as much as they can. This should become their life's purpose. How they choose to serve is up to them. They decide how they will live their lives, and are not forced to show love. Love is not forced. It is something we “love” to do and want to do. Once we have it, we can echo what the apostle Paul said: “**For the love of Christ compels us**, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” (2 Corinthians 5:14, 15, emphasis added). When we have this type of love and live by it, we can say it “compels us,” but never feels forced.

When we observe examples of genuine love, we see that a person feeling love for his partner or family would do anything for them. Even if human love cannot be compared to God's love, there are some similarities because it was created by God. However, it is still just a shadow of the great love God showed us on the cross. Often, we read in the scriptures about the love expected of believers. We are told to forgive, be patient, and bear with one another. But why is this required from us? What is the purpose? It is so that we can demonstrate God's love to everyone. They can get to know Him through us and receive salvation. The purpose is salvation. If we want to lead them to the cross, we must show God's love to them. Christ is the One who saves them, our part is just to lead them to Him. However, we cannot fulfill this task without showing His love and walking in His steps.

Abraham's Petition and the End Times

Some may ask what the end times and the story of Abraham have to do with love and our duty as Christians. There are many lessons we can learn throughout the scriptures, and in this story, we can find some concerning the topic we are dealing with. As mentioned, the purpose of love is to lead others to the cross. It is to let them know that there is someone who can make them experience real love firsthand. Even though believers have a duty to show love, their love and kindness are merely a shadow and a reflection of the real love found on the cross through Jesus. If He is brighter than the sun, we are like the light of the moon, which only reflects the sun's light. Similarly, we don't possess our own light, but we can still shine by reflecting His. It is enough to shine on someone's path and give them a bit of hope. However, the light we reflect is incomparable to the light of the Sun, which is life itself. The moon and certain celestial bodies don't have light of their own. They cannot produce light, but when they are illuminated by the One and only bright light there is, they become useful. This book is about people who desire to be a light to others, directing them to Christ, who will ultimately illuminate their hearts.

The part of Abraham's story that I will deal with in this chapter teaches us about some of the basics of what is required from Christians and the importance we need to attach to them. Before delving into the main topic of the book, I will briefly deviate and provide an introduction. This will help us understand the full context and direction of this Bible story.

Abraham traveled and wandered through different lands and places toward what God had promised him. It was a tough road sometimes, but he obeyed and listened God's to voice. He departed from his homeland, Haran, with his nephew Lot. After a while, they decided to part from each other as the land wasn't large enough for the livestock of both groups, and there was strife between their herdsmen.

Abraham let Lot decide where he would head, and he chose the best-looking land without knowing that it was the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, whose people were exceedingly wicked and immoral (Genesis 13:5-13).

It happened that after a time, the Lord decided to destroy that land because the outcry against it and its sin was great, and He saw their wickedness. He appeared to Abraham and said to him: "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know" (Genesis 18:20-21).

This is the part of the story that has to do with the end times. Why? Because God is always the same. He doesn't change. If He wasn't able to bear certain things in that time and if there was a point to reach when His patience was running out, so it is now. As 2 Peter 3:8-9 tells us, "But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count

slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

When the people of this world mock and ask why His coming is delayed, we need to tell them that it is because of His longsuffering and patience. This means that He is patient now, but His patience will eventually run out. In the time of Sodom and Gomorrah, sin was something common in their lands. It was their style of life, and it was considered as something completely common and normal. The time will come and in part has already started when what was considered as something wrong by society is suddenly something normal and a matter of choice to do or not.

Today you don't have to hide anymore to do certain things that before were considered taboo. They were not only considered taboo by society but were also wrong in front of God. With time, what was considered evil has been deemed good and accepted even by the law itself, and what was good is slowly becoming taboo, uncommon, and pointed out as something wrong (Isaiah 5:20).

This is a danger. We see this drastic change in our society today. I am not going to list all the wrongs and the sins committed today, but you know well that your parents or grandparents didn't even imagine all the things we as a society today accept, things that in their day were rarely even seen or heard of. Topics like divorce, immorality, relationships in disorder, drug abuse, and same-sex marriage – are openly discussed and promoted in today's society and even schools.

Returning to our story about Abraham and Lot, we can see that the condition in which God found Sodom and Gomorrah was similar to our condition now. Some would ask, “Yes, but why is it that He is not coming yet? We keep doing all of these things, and no punishment or even a sign of His disapproval can be seen.”

I would not agree with this because I think He is showing His disapproval, but not in the way we expect Him to. We all expect to see Him coming now in the clouds and showing all of His majesty. This will eventually happen, but it will be at the very end, and then it might be too late for any other action or choice we need to make. He is showing His disapproval now in different ways, even through nature itself. He is just not showing all of His discontent toward sin now because He still wants to give us an opportunity.

The other reason I can point out to those asking why He is not showing up and coming now, is that it hasn't actually been a long time that we have lived in such an extreme and immoral way. Immorality and wickedness have always been there in the world, but the Lord will come when this immorality becomes unsupportable. The trend toward ungodliness even at extreme levels has been around for fifty or sixty years. I am speaking about fifty or sixty years, because this is the time in which many taboos have fallen, even on a global level and have become a promoted fashion in our culture and many people follow that. Things that can make the Lord furious and He cannot stand, have been accepted as something normal. Nevertheless, He still has patience, and because of His love, He still waits for people to repent. This is the reason for which He doesn't show His wrath now. If we had lived a longer time in the immoral way in which we live today, then yes, we could probably consider the fact that He is delaying, but even this is relative as only He knows the purpose and the exact time established for Him to come. But it is not a question of how long we've been living this way, but how low society's moral values are getting.

As said earlier, there has always been immorality in the world, but when it is generally accepted by society and considered to be the ordinary way of life, it is something different.

The story of Noah and the flood has similarities with what we can expect at the end times. There as well, the sin was so much that God wasn't able to bear it anymore. "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart" (Genesis 6:5-6).

My thought on this passage is that as people before the flood lived longer, they developed sin more in their lives. My opinion on why they lived for so long is first because the Lord had decided so, and second because of the natural and atmospheric conditions in which they lived, as the Bible says that there wasn't any rain before the flood. People used to live up to 700-800 years, and in this way, as we already said, they advanced into sin. This is what provoked the Lord to bring the end through water (flood) and probably to decide to shorten the longevity of their life to how we know it today.

"And the Lord said, 'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years' " (Genesis 6:3).

He said this just before the flood. We can see that He also did that for good because He knew that if the man continued to live longer, he would develop sin more and, in this way, would be harder to reach salvation and be saved. What is most important is salvation and eternal life.

Today we often see that the older someone is, the more he has advanced into sin and the harder his heart is toward God.

Imagine how it was when people lived for over 700 years, as the Bible says. What we nevertheless see today is that even though man doesn't live as long, he is still advancing toward sin because of the knowledge he has and the overwhelming information he is surrounded with and can access effortlessly. The information we have today can be used for good, but also for wrong, as it is generally done. Everything today is moving in a faster way.

From these events, we see that there is a limit to God's patience. We can say that when nothing else can be done, when there is no possibility for the gospel and God to break through with His light, then the end will probably come. Obviously, God can do anything anywhere, and His light can penetrate the deepest darkness, but He has also established things to be done in a certain way. We see an example in Genesis 18:22-33 where Abraham conversed with the Lord after He had told him that the end of Sodom and Gomorrah was coming.

Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the Lord. And Abraham came near and said, "*Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?* Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare *it* for the fifty righteous that were in it? Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

So the Lord said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes."

Then Abraham answered and said, “Indeed now, I who *am but* dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose there were five less than the fifty righteous; would You destroy all of the city for *lack of five*?”

So He said, “If I find there forty-five, I will not destroy *it*.”

And he spoke to Him yet again and said, “Suppose there should be forty found there?”

So He said, “I will not do *it* for the sake of forty.”

Then he said, “Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Suppose thirty should be found there?”

So He said, “I will not do *it* if I find thirty there.”

And he said, “Indeed now, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose twenty should be found there?”

So He said, “I will not destroy *it* for the sake of twenty.”

Then he said, “Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?”

And He said, “I will not destroy *it* for the sake of ten.”

So the Lord went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.

We see here that Abraham started conversing with the Lord to see if He was still going to destroy the city if there were found righteous men in it. “And Abraham came near and said, ‘*Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?*’” (Genesis 18:23, emphasis added).

After that, he started to make a kind of petition and ask Him what He would do if there were fifty righteous persons, and the Lord told him that He wouldn’t destroy the place because of these men. Abraham kept on asking, and from fifty, he asked what would happen if there were forty, and then he kept on asking Him until he arrived at the number ten (Genesis 18:32).

For a long time, when I read this story, I thought that when they talked, they arrived at the number of one righteous man only, or they meant that without mentioning it. Then I noticed that they had stopped at the number **ten**, meaning that if there were at least ten righteous persons, God wouldn’t destroy the city. I also wondered why God brought the end when there was at least one righteous man, Lot, but he was indeed the only one, and the last number they had stopped at while conversing was ten.

There was only one righteous man and not ten. The one righteous man was Lot. All of this means that if there were righteous men in a certain place, God wouldn’t bring the end there. When I talk about righteous persons, I don’t talk about people who are righteous by themselves

but people who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus. That is what makes them righteous. Obviously, after being redeemed, they also change their ways and seek to walk in righteousness. The righteous men, the Christians, preserve the earth. They are like the salt of the earth, and what the salt does is preserve. This is one of the qualities for which it is used.

As it happened in the time of Sodom and Gomorrah, so it will happen in these times. Until there are no righteous men on the earth, even a few, God will not bring the end. Now, we need to see what *few* means. If in a place like a city such as Sodom, ten were enough, and that was the last number through which the judgment could've been avoided, we need to see what that will mean for the whole earth. What would be the number?

All of this means that as long as there is hope and potential for the gospel to be shared so that more people can be saved, the end won't come. People today don't know what they are doing when inventing new laws and obstacles to hinder the proclamation of the gospel. All of this is just causing the end to come sooner. The purpose of God is to reign on this earth so that the gospel can be proclaimed. And in which way can it be done if not through the Christians, as this is the way it needs to be done?

While there are believers here, He can still reign on the earth, and His kingdom can be seen through those who believe. Once this becomes impossible, and the iniquity gets to an even higher level, He will have to finish everything and create a new earth on which His ultimate kingdom and justice will reign. But until then, He wants to save as many persons as He can, and that's why He is withholding His ultimate kingdom and justice now, for the love of those who need to be saved. There will eventually come a time in which the gospel is not available. It will be hard to be preached and shared.

The greatest iniquity is not just expressed in certain crimes or immorality but mainly in taking God completely out of the picture and replacing good with evil, or better said, calling what is evil good, and in this way, people would not be able to see and acknowledge their own iniquity.

It is good that the laws of God are still used in our moral code, but when they are removed and replaced with the world's way of defining justice, it will be a problem. We can look at the people in past generations, for example. Speaking in general, their morals were better than those of the people today. There was still evil and immorality, but the people had to hide to do certain things and were also ashamed of them if they did them, while today, the same things are done openly without any shame or regret. They are just considered by those doing them and by many others as something normal.

I am not saying that the people from the past were saints. They were also sinners who needed to repent, but their view on immorality was different. Doing many of the things that people are trying to say are acceptable today was still considered wrong. They knew when they were doing something wrong. That's the difference. When you do something wrong, you know that you have to repent, but when the wrong you are doing is considered completely normal for you, and there is no law or something to tell you it is wrong, that's a problem. This is the attitude that God doesn't accept. When people don't feel ashamed of their condition.

“Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; Nor did they know how to blush. Therefore, they shall fall among those who fall; at the time I punish them, they shall be cast down,” says the Lord” (Jeremiah 6:15).

The downfall of today’s society will be when the knowledge of evil and good is completely distorted. It is already going in that direction, but there will be a time when it will reach its peak. “Where *there is* no revelation, the people cast off restraint; But happy *is* he who keeps the law” (Proverbs 29:18).

Here we can see how a nation without a vision and guidance from God perishes. We see how our society these days is slowly removing and changing the original laws and principles we had, which were based on the laws of God. The role of the law is not to change anyone because it can’t, but at least it can show people they are wrong, which can bring them to the realization of their condition and repentance. But how will they realize it if they grow up and live in a society that doesn’t teach them what is really right and wrong, good or evil, and has something else for laws and principles rather than what God states? How will they know it, if what is wrong is considered good and vice versa?

Going back to Abraham’s story and the questions he asked the Lord concerning the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, we see that they stopped at the number ten. We can compare this situation to the end times, which are about to come, as God is always the same, and He will deal with situations similarly as He doesn’t change throughout time.

There are some points of view here that slightly differ from each other because we also don’t know the exact way things will turn at the end times. It is not something simple we can discuss and take positions on, as Jesus Himself told us, there are things we won’t be able to know. He told us to be watchful and ready, which was His main message, and He told us that we wouldn’t know the exact hour He would come.

Many people have different points of view concerning the end times, and they stick firmly to them. I personally don’t have strong and firm convictions on all the points. I am sure and firm on what He told us about His return and that we need to be watchful and ready, which is the most important, while I don’t know the exact way or time that will happen, as some things are not meant for us to know because the Bible states so and also because most important is to be ready for it. We can know, though, if He is close as He gave us a comparison in Matthew 24:32-35 in which He says that the signs of His coming are as the leaves of a fig tree and the summer’s approaching. Just as the summer approaches when we see leaves appearing on the fig tree, so His coming is close when we see the signs.

Someone might ask why we are looking at the topic of end times if this book is about God’s love. It is because, in Matthew 24:24, Jesus said that we need to watch. What does “to watch” mean? It means to pray and depend on God, have faith in Him, and be awakened spiritually. Yes, this is what it mainly means, but being awakened spiritually also means living righteously toward others, loving and sharing the good news with them because time is short. This is the essence of the gospel. Jesus, in the Great Commission, instructed us to preach the gospel to all the world. “All the world” could mean the other side of the globe or the house next door. The point is preaching the good news for the salvation of mankind. If we belong to God and are

spiritually awakened, we would feel compassion for people because we know where they are headed without Christ.

“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed *is* that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing.” (Matthew 24:45, 46)

We see that this parable has to do with watching and waiting for Jesus. That includes watching over others and taking care of them. Being ready for Jesus is doing these things.

According to the story, Lot was the only believer there, and if there were at least ten, God wouldn't have destroyed the place.

I think Lot's duty was to spread and share with others what he knew about the Lord. If the righteous men in the city were more in number, it wouldn't end in this way. We can think that he probably did it and nobody listened to him, but we can also think that he was probably a believer who didn't spend much of his time trying to do that in his everyday life. Why? Because the moment he tried to warn his sons-in-law about the coming end, they thought he was joking (Genesis 19:14). They were probably not used to him talking on that topic, or perhaps his life did not represent this image.

The other thing was that his wife looked like she was so attached to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. We know it because she looked back at the end and, in this way, turned into a statue of salt. The point here is not that she looked back but that she desired what was left behind. Okay, I also know that there are many believers who have families who don't share their faith, and this is something that happens. These people are still faithful to God and do everything possible for the gospel.

Lot's situation looked quite different. There was also the fact that he chose to live in places such as Sodom and Gomorrah. Yes, if someone stays in ungodly and dangerous places with the purpose of bringing a light there, that is fine and is actually what we are called to. To be a light. Still, Lot and his household's main reason was another, such as the land which they chose looked fruitful and well-watered (Genesis 13:10-11). That prevailed over God's purposes.

To all these factors, we can add the behavior of his daughters after they escaped with him (Genesis 19:30-33). It is clear they weren't used to living the right way, probably because they didn't hear much about it and were not raised that way. Even if they did hear, it probably wasn't emphasized to them as something of prime importance. We can also say that they may have heard the message presented to them in a proper way but rebelled and didn't accept it. Based on the circumstances, however, I am keen to think they didn't hear much about it.

By all of this, we can see plenty of indicators that Lot was probably not performing his duties as a believer in the best way. Yes, he was a righteous man, but he was probably keeping this righteousness more to himself. This is not what we are called to. We need to share it. That's why we can, in part, attribute Lot's family's situation and their unbelief to him. The Bible speaks about people who build on the right foundation but use materials that perish easily, such as wood, hay, and straw.

“Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has

built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

It looks like there are some people who build with materials that endure fire and others who build with materials that do not.

They will be saved, but as through fire, the same as Lot was. In Lot's case, he was indeed saved through fire as the city where he lived burned, but I am speaking figuratively about the fire in our case. Fire represents a form of a trial. The way someone builds brings consequences obviously. I know that today there are imperfections in my life, but I would like to trust in God for that. **The greatest imperfection in Lot was perhaps not in his personal life, but in the fact that he probably didn't share what he knew about the Lord with others.**

Going back to the topic of the end times, we can see that when there were not enough righteous people in Sodom and Gomorrah, its end came. We can compare it with the present situation. There are still righteous men on the earth, but one day when they are no more, the end will come. It will happen when there is no more possibility for sharing the gospel. If we look at the future situation, there might be *two ways* in which there will be no more righteous persons on the earth one day. When I speak about righteous persons, I obviously speak about people who have been saved by the Lord.

The first case we will look at, and the way this can happen, is that the laws and the way of life will be changed drastically, and the godliness and the positive Christian influence will decrease significantly. The righteous persons will become fewer. It would happen as in the days of Lot. As he was the only one, in the same way in that time, those who are righteous, because they are saved, and Christ's righteousness has been applied to them, will be very few, and the Lord will take them (rapture them), and the end will come.

We see today how the regulations prohibiting Christians from sharing the gospel with others are increasing. With the new age cultural movement and in education, Christianity and God are not welcome. This idea supports the theory of a post-tribulation rapture, meaning that the Christians will go through the great tribulation, and after that, when immorality and lawlessness are at their peak, they will be taken. Their number will decrease because of the growing opposition toward the gospel. The number of the true Christians will decrease because of the opposition, the difficulty in sharing the gospel, and the increasing immorality in society. Their numbers will probably decrease because there won't any longer be so many new converts to Christianity. I mean that the people from the new coming generation will come harder to the faith. One of the reasons will be that the gospel will be no longer available as before. It won't be preached freely as before, and it might be prohibited. We already see that it has been taken out of some of the schools. The moral values, in general, will be changed, the same as in the times of Sodom and Gomorrah.

We hope, though, that these times will not come quickly, and we can still have the opportunity to proclaim the good news. It needs to be done in any circumstance, though. There will be, however, those times when the opposition toward the gospel will grow so much that God will not be able to bear it anymore, and He will take the believers, meaning that the rapture will occur, and the end will come immediately after that, same as in the case of Lot. He was taken out of Sodom and Gomorrah, and their end came right after that. As we said before, this is the case

of post-tribulation rapture, when the Christians go through the great tribulation and are taken after that. Whether there is a pre-tribulation or post-tribulation rapture, the end will come because there will no longer be believers and salt on the earth. In the case of the pre-tribulation rapture, it is because the believers are taken, and after that, the immorality and the extreme difficulty will come, so much that God will not bear it. In the post-tribulation, their number will decrease because of the difficulty and the opposition itself, and after that, the few left will be taken (raptured). In both cases, we see that the reason for which God's patience will finish will be because the iniquity will take total control, and Satan will try to establish his kingdom fully here on earth.

As we said already, the other way in which could happen is that the Christians will be raptured first, and the great tribulation will start then. This is the pre-tribulation rapture. So, the decrease of the righteous people on the earth will happen because God will take them away. This is because He won't let them go through the exceedingly bad trials that will take place on the earth.

In both cases, the end will come when there are no longer righteous people on Earth. Surely God wants to preserve His people from judgment. The question is whether they will be preserved from the great tribulation or they will go through that and then be raptured after it. This is a mystery for us. **What we need to do is be ready and watchful and share the good news with others.** We need to do it as much as possible because we don't know when the Lord is coming. The Bible says He will come as a thief at night, meaning when we least expect it.

Many people made mistakes when predicting the date throughout history. God doesn't want us to know all the things at once, and we are not meant to know some things because they are meant to be taken by faith. After all, faith is needed for salvation. We might imagine how His coming could happen, but it might not occur that way.

For example, movies about rapture give us an idea of what could happen and warn us to be ready, but these are just the way the movie makers imagine it could happen.

The issue is that people want the rapture to happen tomorrow, and when they don't see it happening, they start to question the Word of God. But Peter said it well in 2 Peter 3:1-4: "Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first: **that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation"** (2 Peter 3:1-4, emphasis added).

We read in 2 Peter 3:8-9, "But beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

We see here the main purpose of God "delaying" His promise of coming back and redeeming His elect. It is because He still wants people to know Him and be saved. He looks differently at the time from the way we do, and His eyes see much further than what we can see or imagine.

He sees the complete picture of our redemption. What an amazing God we have! The best thing we can do is to trust Him!

The Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-13)

Which is our mission as Christians?

What we read in the Bible is not just for information purposes, uncovering some secrets, or the meaning of certain things, but it is to improve our lives and relationship with God. Therefore, what we read or what He gives us to understand is also for us to practice. When we read or understand something from the Bible, it's important to put it into practice. My desire is to be able to practice what I'm about to say, even though I have to admit I often struggle, especially in the area of this topic.

In this chapter, we will look at a parable from the New Testament that Jesus told. This parable has sparked quite a few discussions and controversies. Our focus will not be on those debates but on what the lessons Jesus wants to teach us through it. What He wants to teach us through the parable is not some new concept, but it is taught all along the scripture, and it is one of the characteristics of God. It represents His nature: compassion and love. For some, this parable might not mean that. However, when looking for a meaning or interpretation of something in the scripture, we need to look at what the rest of the scripture says. In this way, the Bible explains itself. We should examine what God wants to tell us through His word as a whole. His word is consistent and moves towards the same goal, having the same Spirit. I referred to other passages to help me understand the meaning of the parable. It is still a personal opinion, but it is based on scripture. Whoever has the wisdom and the Spirit of God can evaluate it for himself. Remember, we are discussing a parable, which means we should not interpret it literally. The word of God contains many literal teachings. However, parables are stories of similitudes Jesus used to convey messages and lessons. For example, look at the parable of the sower. Jesus spoke about a seed representing the word of God and the soil as our hearts. It wasn't actual seeds and soil that Jesus was concerned about, but our hearts and relationship with Him.

Let's look at the parable of the unjust steward in Luke 16:1-15

¹ He also said to His disciples: "There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. ² So he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.'

³ "Then the steward said within himself, 'What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. ⁴ I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.'

⁵“So he called every one of his master’s debtors to *him*, and said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ ⁶ And he said, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’ So he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’ ⁷ Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ So he said, ‘A hundred measures of wheat.’ And he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and write eighty.’ ⁸ So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.

⁹“And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. ¹⁰ He who *is* faithful in *what is* least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in *what is* least is unjust also in much. ¹¹ Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true *riches*? ¹² And if you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, who will give you what is your own?

¹³“No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

¹⁴ Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. ¹⁵ And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

In this parable, Jesus provides us with wise counsel. Towards the end of the passage, Jesus talks about unjust riches, also known as "unrighteous mammon." This is how He refers to money and riches in general. In this case, it is not because those riches were acquired in an unrighteous way. Through this parable, He was warning people not to be selfish, and not to love mammon (wealth) above God (Luke 16:13). He advised them to remain faithful even in small matters, such as material possessions like money and other items. Money and material possessions are the least in God’s eyes, but nevertheless, we need to be faithful with them and use them for good purposes instead of selfish reasons. We will not just talk about money here, but also about the general idea that these verses discuss. We understand the concept up to this point.

We must understand that this parable has a deeper meaning than can be seen at first glance. In the beginning, there is a rich man we can assume represents God because He is rich and abounding in everything. There is also His steward. The parable tells us that the steward had mismanaged the rich man’s goods. For this reason, he was found unfaithful. Reading the story, I had to ask myself if I was just and righteous in everything. Am I faithful in everything? Am I fulfilling everything God requires of me? The parable talks about a person in the Kingdom of God: a person already born again who knows the will of His master. And speaking about “being unjust,” we are not referring to someone sinning deliberately but a person trying to accomplish everything required of him but still unable. If we are honest with ourselves, we (at least I) realize that sometimes we fall short of what we should do or how we carry out His will even though we desire to please God. We are, therefore, not talking about someone doing something wrong but a person who fails to accomplish all that is expected of him. In essence, it is about whether or not

we complete our tasks. We can compare this to the role of the steward, who had specific duties. In the same way, as Christians, God will give us responsibilities in the kingdom of heaven. When looking at this parable, we are prompted to think of an unjust steward, who then dealt shrewdly and pleased his master, but as we already said, this is a comparison, and we need rather to think of someone who is unjust according to God's standards. Someone whose life looked probably well but still lacked in front of God. Most of the scenes in this parable are examples used to show us something and are not to be taken literally as the rest of God's word. Parables are there to show us the attitudes we need to have and help us find a spiritual comparison to the present situation in which we live.

Let's have a look at how the parable begins:

"He also said to His disciples: "There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods." (Luke 16:1)

He was called "the unjust steward" because he was wasting his master's goods. He didn't steal the goods but was wasting them. He wasn't making good use of them. I often found myself in similar situations. Despite being zealous for God and seeking Him with all my strength, I was still not completely satisfied. I knew I was not fully pleasing the master. There was something missing in my life as a believer.

We see this steward being unfaithful with his master's goods but then finding a solution.

"So he called every one of his master's debtors to him, and said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' And he said 'A hundred measures of oil' So he said to him, 'Take your bill and sit down quickly and write fifty'" (Luke 16:5, 6)

In the same way, he did with the other one. We see that what he was doing benefited other people. In this way, he somehow sorted out his situation because his master commended him for his actions. His master was pleased with him as, in a shrewd way, he assisted others to pay their debt. We assume he helped them because he told them to write less than what they owed. He made it easier for them. Why did this act please his master? Because it was going to be easier for the debtors to pay their debt back. Of course, people would rather get some of their money back instead of not getting anything at all. In this way, the debtors would also be on good terms with the master. He said to the one owing a hundred measures of oil: "Take your bill and sit down quickly and write fifty," To the other one owing a hundred measures of wheat, he said to write eighty.

We need to understand that this is just a parable and a comparison with what happens in the spiritual world. It does not have to be taken literally. This is true for all parables. We might be thinking: "What does God have to do with people owing a hundred measures of oil or wheat, and what does this all mean?" Similarly, people may have wondered about the relevance of the seed and soil in the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1-9). The people were probably asking: "What does God have to do with seeds and soil?" Jesus later explained its meaning. We see that when it comes to parables, we need to look for the spiritual meaning and confirm it with other passages from scripture. This leads to the possibility that not the entire meaning of this parable has to do with literal riches or money, but the attitude behind them.

So, going back to the parable of the unjust steward, it's not clear exactly what he did, but he likely helped pay back other people's debts. In any case, he did what he did, and the master was pleased because it made it easier for those people to pay back what they owed.

You know that when people owe a lot of money, it's hard for them to pay it back and they often don't. But in this case, with the help of the shrewd steward, they were able to. This also helped the master to gain the trust and confidence of the people, and some could even have become his servants.

The Bible states that we need to carry each one's burdens.

“Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6:2)

We observe that in a way, he carried the debtors' burdens. This is something that someone will do for the sake of love. We all have a debt to God as those people had to their master. The debt represents our sins. Obviously, Christ paid the debt for us, but there is also our walk of faith to receive this promise. In the parable, what the steward did for them was to help them believe it was possible. He helped them in part. We can lead others to Christ and help them in part, but they need to walk the rest of the path. They need to believe and answer the call. No one else can do it for them. When they answer the call and accept the love of Jesus, their debt is paid in full. **This is done by Jesus. It is His work.** The parable shows, as part of the picture, what we can do through Him. In reality, we know that He is the one who paid the whole debt. We can see that the steward paid one part of the debt, and the rest was for them to sort out. Jesus helped him to do that. This is the meaning of it. None of us can pay anything by ourselves; none of us can properly help our neighbor by ourselves. Even leading others to Christ depends on God's power working through us. No one can lead another man to Jesus' feet except by His Spirit and power. When people come to Jesus and ask for forgiveness and redemption, it is because God helps them and allows them to receive that forgiveness. Once again, it shows that Jesus is involved in that. He paid for their sins. We see He is involved when somebody leads another person to the cross, his sins are forgiven there by His sacrifice, and He is involved in the personal relationship that person will have with Him after that. He is present in the believer's conversion from the beginning to the end, and everything happens by His power. All the glory be to Him!

In the parable, the steward managed to help one person with fifty, the other with twenty, as he told him to write eighty instead of the hundred that he was owing. “Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ So he said, ‘A hundred measures of wheat.’ And he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and write eighty.’” (Luke 16:7) All the people in the story owed a hundred. A hundred is a whole number and the use of it is not a coincidence, it shows us something important. A believer can only help another person in part. They can help with twenty or fifty or even more, but they can never pay off the entire debt. It means that the complete solution doesn't come from a person, even if he is a very dedicated believer. It is important to be guided by the Spirit of God when leading others to the complete solution, Christ. When I talk about leading someone to Christ, I am not just talking about leading someone in the sinner's prayer, which can happen, but setting a good example. **We should demonstrate through our daily conduct how to live for Christ and by sharing the good news of the gospel through preaching.**

Each person's case is different, and our approach depends on their individual needs. We may need to impact a particular area of their life to a certain extent, while for others, it may be a

different area. I am not speaking about a humanistic kind of help, but a spiritual one, with the power of His Spirit. In addition, there is the spiritual kind of love. We cannot practice this love without experiencing His love first. The Bible says that love fulfills the law. “Owe no one anything except to love one another, **for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.**” (Romans 13:8, emphasis added) and “Love does not harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.” (Romans 13:10)

We just need to show this kind of Biblical love and be led by it. This will determine how we are going to be used. We can never comprehend with our logic the kind of help someone needs. I am using the word “used” here with a lot of fear and respect because we are nothing without Him. We cannot do anything of lasting value if we are not in the hands of the master. Yes, we may attempt to do things our way and with our capabilities, but they will never result in anything fruitful in the eyes of God. Going back to the beginning of the parable, we see that the steward couldn’t accomplish what was required of him (Luke 16:1, 2). He did not bear fruit and he wasn’t productive for his master. I sometimes identify myself with the steward, not bearing fruit for God.

We can see that God is very pleased with the kind of love that focuses on the needs of others. Love is not selfish, “does not behave rudely, **does not seek its own**, is not provoked, thinks no evil;” (1 Corinthians 13:5, emphasis added)

At the same time, we see Jesus rebuking the Pharisees for loving money and being selfish.

“Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.” (Luke 16:14,15)

Material aspect of the parable

Obviously, it is not just money we are talking about here. The love for things like money is just a manifestation of our selfishness. Jesus was telling those people to be faithful with the so-called “unjust riches” and to share them with others. We can look at the spiritual side of this parable warning us not to be selfish, and the practical side that is addressing actual possessions like material wealth and money. The Pharisees loved money and didn’t appreciate Jesus’ teachings on this topic. Jesus referred to wealth as “mammon,” “unrighteous,” and “least” to downplay its importance. He wanted us to know that material wealth is insignificant. It cannot make us inherit the kingdom, and that’s why it is called “unrighteous”. Because material wealth is not righteous in itself, it cannot be used to gain access or buy our way into the kingdom. By calling it “unrighteous,” He did not mean it was obtained in an unrighteous way, as we often think when we hear this word.

“He who *is* faithful in *what is* least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in *what is* least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the **unrighteous mammon**, who will commit to your trust the true *riches*?” (Luke 16:10, 11, emphasis added)

Do you remember the story of Simon, the magician, who wanted to buy the power of the Holy Spirit? He was told his money would perish with him and encouraged to repent of his sin. **Money cannot guarantee us entrance into the Kingdom even if we use it for charity work, or spend it to help someone.** Salvation is a gift donated to us that we receive by faith in Jesus. Money cannot buy it. Still, it is a tool that can be used to benefit the Kingdom because we live in a world where money is necessary. Money, in and of itself, is not important and will perish like anything else on earth. When we understand this truth, we will not cling to wealth so much. People hold on to it because they don't see and believe in what is eternal. Some people will even neglect their loved ones to acquire more money. People are obsessed with getting more and more money because they believe it gives them power. The Scriptures also call money, "the root of all evil." (1 Timothy 6:10).

I think it is very difficult to escape the snare of money and to stop giving it so much significance. The way out is a true conversion to the Lord. This is how people stop giving so much importance to material possessions and start appreciating what is eternal. They understand that having treasures in heaven is more valuable than anything else because they endure forever. But how can someone understand this truth? Only through genuine faith. A person needs to be convinced by the Spirit of God to understand this truth. I am not saying that people should renounce everything, but they must realize what is of real value. The Bible tells us we can have what is necessary for our livelihood (1 Timothy 6:6-8). Believers can even be wealthy. There is nothing wrong with that unless we love those riches above God and His will. Some rich people profit from their businesses and use their wealth to support God's kingdom. They are blessed by God for doing this and help the kingdom to grow. Throughout this parable, Jesus was explaining that if we have material riches at our disposal, we need to use them for the growth of the kingdom in addition to meeting our own needs. By doing so, we can reap eternal rewards not just temporary benefits.

“And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. He who *is* faithful in *what is* least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in *what is* least is unjust also in much.” (Luke 16:9, 10)

Let me clarify the point. It is not that God's kingdom can be bought with money, but that it can be used with understanding so that God's will can be accomplished here on earth. Instead of using money for selfish purposes like buying a better car, we can invest it in something useful for the kingdom. I am just using random examples and not judging anyone who wants to buy a good car for themselves. Maybe we can even have this after we have attended to what is really important. We need His Spirit for guidance and wisdom when it comes to giving and investing in the kingdom. It is not a question of giving more than others, but understanding what to give and doing it for the right reasons as we are led by the Spirit. This parable is a representation and comparison of both the spiritual and material worlds. More than a representation of an exact point or object, it reveals to us God's heart and the way He sees things.

The main idea is not to be selfish. If I help build a church, it is because the word of God will be preached there. If I buy a pair of shoes for someone, it is because I care for him, and would also like to talk to him about God and evangelize him. Both actions are right and are connected to the Kingdom.

I can also buy a Bible for someone for the same reason. The scriptures teach us how to give the right way. We should not sound a trumpet (attract attention) when we do a charitable deed (Matthew 6:2). Instead, we should do it for God and give Him the glory. The most important part of this story is the spiritual aspect, although we must keep in mind that if we follow this teaching, as any other biblical teaching, it will also positively affect our physical life. We will now continue to discuss the spiritual perspective of this parable without neglecting the material one.

Spiritual aspect of the parable

After receiving His love through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, it is up to us whether we want to share it or not. We need to have the desire to do so. Love is perfection, as the apostle Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 13.

“Love never fails. But whether *there are* prophecies, they will fail; whether *there are* tongues, they will cease; whether *there is* knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. **But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.**” (1 Corinthians 13:8-10, emphasis added)

Love covers a multitude of sins. “And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.”“ (1 Peter 4:8)

All of us lack something, none of us are perfect in everything. But having this love in our lives combined with faith, and directed to others, will cover our imperfections. Love is interested in others' welfare; cares and is close to them. Sometimes all it takes is a simple: “How are you doing?”

In the past, I tried many times to be more spiritual. I wanted to reach others with the word. Sometimes I succeeded, but many times I failed. This led me to feel deluded and frustrated. Then I discovered this love (that I had already received from God). It taught me how to be more interested in others and how to serve them. Do you know what happened? I received more of His Spirit, and I was able to share more of His word with people and testify to them.

Often, what we want to do is just meet someone and start proclaiming the word of God and convert them right there on the spot. Of course, it can happen, but it is not the same for each person. What God requires of us is different from what we think. He wants us to show His love. When we do, God can reward us with special moments when we can meet someone, give out His word and the person gets converted by the power of God. The love and the heart of God we carry is the main ingredient for such encounters.

I remember the early years. I had a great zeal to tell people about God and His word. Even though I was trying, I was often deluded because of their responses. I did not know how to relate to them. I hardly laughed or tried to have a good time with them. Because of my zeal, all I wanted to talk about was the Bible. I was not open to other topics. There was nothing wrong with my desire, but I was not humble. I didn't want to lower myself to someone else's level. I didn't take the time listen to them so that I could know and understand them better; their likes and dislikes. People will convert to God, not only because we hammer them with God's words, but by the godly example of our lives. While we should share the word of God with others, it should

happen naturally when the opportunity arises and when He guides us and gives us the right words.

It's important to get to know someone and have a conversation with them before explaining the truths of the gospel. This is where being "shrewd" comes in, as Luke 16:8 tells us.

“So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.”

We are not speaking about being shrewd like the children of this world who deceive maliciously, but being shrewd in how we can effectively share the gospel with others. The way His Spirit gives us. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

¹⁹ For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; ²⁰ and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those *who are* under the law, as under the law, that I might win those *who are* under the law; ²¹ to those *who are* without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those *who are* without law; ²² to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some. ²³ Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with *you*.

For this reason, when approaching someone, try to make them interested and willing to listen. We should first try to make friends with them so that they are eventually open to hearing the gospel. I am not saying we should get entangled with their sin.

“And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home.” (Luka 16:9)

Of course, this doesn't apply to someone lying on his deathbed with no time left. In such situations, we need to get straight to the word because of the limited time. We need to have an understanding given by the Spirit of God of what the right method is for the different cases we encounter.

Even Jesus was called a friend of sinners. He humbled himself to their level. He set a great example. Jesus humbled himself by coming to earth and spending time with sinners, showing them compassion, and sharing the good news. How much more should we who are redeemed sinners (nothing more and nothing less if not by His Grace), follow His example. I must confess that I have often neglected what I am sharing now, but my desire is to follow the example of love that Jesus set before us.

We can also look at the situation with the Pharisees and the Scribes. They wanted to be perfect and accomplish the whole law. That's why they started adding many other insignificant laws to the main laws that Moses gave.

“And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men – the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.” (Mark 7:7,8)

What happened was that they neglected the most important ones, like mercy and justice. “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: **justice and mercy and faith**. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.” (Matthew 23:23, emphasis added)

In the same way, we also want to be righteous, to accomplish things, but not for the glory of God (even if it might look so). We want to be pure and abstain from certain things. When we fail, we get frustrated. All this can take our sight off what God really wants from us – to reach others and show His glory to them. He is so interested in our relationships with others. Don’t you see? Half of the Bible speaks about our relationship with Him, and the other half – the relationship with others. I’m saying this because sometimes we are so focused on being perfect and pure (I am not saying at all that this is wrong), that we neglect the people around us, which is also very important. However, I am not saying that we should ignore our personal problems and focus only on helping others if we have serious issues in our own lives. I am only saying that sometimes we focus on self-righteousness rather than helping others and giving them hope through the good news. Our joy mustn’t be based only on the fact that we haven’t sinned in a while, but because we see that we are accomplishing God’s will. Reaching others with God’s love and the gospel is God’s main focus. That is why He is working and perfecting His image in us so that we can be more like Him and have the love to reach out to others. Being transformed into His image and living in righteousness does not mean we should exalt ourselves by displaying it to others. The primary motivation is to please God, and second, to set an example of what pleases Him and how people should live for Him. For this reason, we mustn’t neglect the desire to be pure in our lives and to walk in the right way. By doing so, we can set an example for the people we are trying to reach out to, and the message we share will be powerful in us.

I am not saying that we shouldn’t focus on being pure. I am just saying it’s easier when we are in the presence of God, and His power is working through us. But how will it be more effective and evident in us than when we are reaching out to others? All these things are connected - being pure, and seeking God for ourselves and for others. I’m obviously addressing those born again, who have been sealed by His love. Without being born again and experiencing **His** love ourselves, we cannot have and show **His** love. If someone is not born from God, he will only show a humanistic kind of love that, unfortunately, has its limits. But the love of God is what is described in 1 Corinthians 13.

If you already know God, do you know what He wants you to do? Well, one obvious calling is reaching others. Often, this doesn’t happen by going and bluntly sharing the word with them, but by being interested in them.

As Christians, we may also live selfishly, even when it comes to our spiritual life. To be always worried only about our relationship with God, if we are fine or have accomplished something, without considering the need of others. I am not saying this is wrong, but I believe the secret to pleasing God (I am talking to those who are born again already) is to direct our sight toward others and to inquire if they are fine with Him. To check if they have a relationship with Him or are lost and need a Savior.

This obviously means to give a hand to others, not pushing them away further from the truth by criticizing them for their faults. Automatically, our relationship with Him will be closer

because it pleases Him to see us reaching out to others. This is the reason He came - to give His life for us. He died thinking of us. We don't see selfishness in His actions. His justice could have been satisfied even if He let us pay for our mistakes, but He chose not to. He died so that we could have an opportunity to be redeemed.

Matthew 9:36 says Jesus had compassion for the multitudes because they were weary and scattered, like sheep without a shepherd. He could see the need in them. As believers, we should also try to see when others need help, like Jesus did.

The Pharisees were called lovers of money in Luke 16:14 because of their selfishness. I mentioned earlier that money isn't the only reason we're speaking about this topic, even though it is part of the consideration. The love of God goes much beyond that since someone can give His possessions away but still not have love, as it is said in 1 Corinthians 13:3.

“And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.”

“Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6:2)

We see that in this way, we accomplish the law. Something that the steward in Luke 16 couldn't do. He was found not faithful. Love accomplishes the law and covers a multitude of sins (ours as well).

“let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.” (James 5:20)

God is interested in other people's lives. If we want to be one with Him, we need to see as He sees. Then our joy will multiply. As scripture says in Acts 20:35, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

And this is what the parable in Luke 16 is about. We need to invest time in others and take a genuine interest in them. We can't expect to receive blessing after blessing simply by living ordinary lives without doing what is important in God's eyes.

When talking about love, Paul talks of it as something excellent and perfect. He said in 1 Corinthians 13:11: “When I was a child, I spoke as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”

To live out love means to be mature in Him. I am not talking about the kind of love that lets people do whatever they want to do and agrees with everything. No! The real love found in Jesus has a specific character; it does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth. Love corrects what is wrong.

If our life with God is based only on accomplishing and doing things, even having zeal, then we will surely fail in some of them. We will never be satisfied. He wants to show us a more perfect and excellent way.

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love

you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others*? Do not even the tax collectors do so? ⁴⁸ Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:43-48)

We see that the last verse in this passage encourages us to be perfect. The verses before that speak about true love. Often showing interest, caring, or showing love to others is considered the least. We are talking about simple gestures like asking someone how they're doing or talking to them to understand their needs. We may not always be able to share the word of God with others, but we can show care by listening and being interested in them. When the time is right, God will open the door for the gospel to be shared. The word of God says: "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much." This verse is found in Luke 16:10, which comes after the parable of the unjust servant. It encourages us to be interested even in people who are the 'least,' those who seem unimportant. Jesus often referred to them as the "little ones." Usually, only a few people pay attention to someone who is considered a 'little one,' or of least importance. That's why Jesus explained in one of His parables why we should: "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'" (Matthew 25:40)

When we go through tough times, we may wonder how we can bear and endure. Well, the answer is found in love. Scripture tells us that love "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (1 Corinthians 13:7)

Even when we struggle with doubt or go through trials, we can still show love. We can look for it and approach those in need to show them love. Love helps us overcome trials and difficult moments. Many people isolate themselves from others when going through challenging situations, especially Christians. They focus on prayer and examining themselves. There is nothing wrong with praying and examining ourselves; it is necessary in times of trials. However, we should not forget the advice given to us in the Bible. It says: "**Give, and it will be given to you:** good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." (Luke 6:38, emphasis added)

This passage does not only have practical principles, but spiritual ones as well. We need to give spiritually so that we can receive something from God. Obviously, praying and reading the Word is important and must always accompany us, but God is pleased when we give to others. How do we give? By showing love and proclaiming His word. God's desire is for us to give out what we receive. This is one of the reasons why He gives us His word and blesses us. Sometimes we may wonder why we do not receive as much as we expected after praying for a long time, reading His word, and fasting (which is something we obviously need to do). It is because we may have neglected the part of giving in our lives.

"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed *is* that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing." (Matthew 24:45)

This is another passage about giving. It talks about “feeding” others, but in a spiritual manner.

“The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.” (Proverbs 11:25)

“Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” (Luke 6:38)

All these passages that speak about giving and being generous can be applied in the physical realm. However, the Bible generally places significance on the spiritual aspect as this is the most important. Our souls will one day be saved.

We can conclude that in order to receive, we need to give. God is pleased when we do this. We must start by feeding ourselves with the word and prayer. This is essential because what can we give if we haven’t received from Him? When we give what we have received, He multiplies it in our hands and blesses us even more. Our strength is multiplied. This is like the story in the Bible when the disciples gave those few loaves of bread and fish to Jesus to feed the five thousand people (Mark 6:30-44). They were few to begin with, but they multiplied. The multiplication only happened after they placed them in the hands of Jesus for the purpose of feeding the people.

Looking at the parables that come before and after the parable of the unjust steward, we can see that they are connected. The one that precedes it is the parable of the prodigal son. Like the unjust steward, he also wasted his wealth, but we see that he repented and returned home to His father. Everything was fine, besides the attitude of the older brother. He did not want to join in the celebrations for his younger brother (Luke 16:28-30). Right after this, Jesus started telling the parable of the unjust steward. After He had finished, He provided His final recommendations regarding its meaning. He then told another parable about a beggar, Lazarus, and a rich man who lived in luxury.

From what we can see in the parable, there was nothing wrong with him living in luxury. The mistake was in his lack of generosity. The rich man did not help or give Lazarus anything at all (Luke 16:20, 21). He was living selfishly. He could have been a believer or knew the law because he called Abraham his father (Luke 16:24). Nevertheless, he was living for himself.

Could the parables of the prodigal son, the unjust steward, and the rich man and Lazarus be connected with the intention to advise us not to live selfishly and love our neighbor? Is Jesus using the parable of the unjust steward and the rich man and Lazarus to reproach the older son’s attitude in the parable of the prodigal son? He didn’t receive his younger brother with love and complained when his brother returned home. By telling the parable of the unjust steward, Jesus was most likely saying that even while staying at home, like the older brother, and living an apparently good and religious life, we can still be wasting our master’s goods. The prodigal son went away and lived a sinful life, but the older brother also erred by not having the right attitude while living in the father’s house and only thinking about himself. Through the two parables that follow the one about the prodigal son, Jesus encourages believers to live selfless Christian lives that please the Lord. Being in the house of the Father is not enough. In Luke 15, which comes right before these two parables, Jesus addresses the topic of those who are lost through three

parables: the parable of the lost coin, the parable of the lost sheep, and the parable of the prodigal son.

The last parable concludes by introducing the role of the older brother. Following this, Jesus commences teaching about attitude through the next two parables - the unjust steward and the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16). These parables deal with the attitude of someone who has always been in the father's house and is accountable for what God has given them. God holds us all accountable before Him, and this is something that we, as believers, can relate to. It is not just the sinners or those who do not know Him that will be held accountable, but also those who belong to Him.

People today are trying to discover the secrets of the universe and the depths of wisdom, but if we can say so, love is at the center of all. It is so fundamental because love was the motivation for the sacrifice on the cross, and we can be saved because of it. God created humans and placed emotions and passions in us. We are not like the rest of the creation, having just primal instincts. There is more to us. We have souls and feelings, and among them is love.

God didn't create His love to compare it with the love we feel; on the contrary, He gave us our emotions, including love, to compare it to His love. This is there to make us understand that life is more than just surviving day by day. God created something powerful and placed it in us: love. He gave us feelings of love, and we see them between a man and a woman or parents and their children. The Bible is full of such examples to help us understand the love of God. We can find many passages representing Christ as the bridegroom and the church or each believer individually as the bride (John 3:29), (2 Corinthians 11:2), (Revelation 21:2).

The entire book of Song of Solomon discusses the love between a man and a woman, which represents the love between Christ and the church (us). God has blessed us with this beautiful sense and feeling to remind us that we are not here merely to exist and survive, led by our instincts, but for a higher purpose. Sadly, in today's world, love and other beautiful feelings are being suppressed and disregarded.

There are two fundamental aspects that govern our lives: consumption and pleasure. They have become an integral part of our lives. Some people even avoid getting married. Everyone is being incited to prioritize their own well-being over others. Perhaps this is a tactic of the enemy to deprive us of feelings connected to the love of God. I am not saying that our love is the same as the love of God. His love is unconditional and goes beyond our limits. It gets us to walk two miles instead of one, and to forgive those who harm us. Still, our love, even being just a shadow of His love, is there to show us that we are created for a purpose.

There is a bond between love, faith, and hope; they complement and reinforce each other, but the strongest of the three is love. It often leads us to faith and hope. Whenever we feel a lack of either faith or hope, we can always turn to love. Of course, it is faith which comes first, and through it we get saved. However, we mustn't forget that we are saved because the love of God reached us first and helped us to have faith.

I said the things above for those who are already saved. In this case, the steward was already participating in God's Kingdom, but like many Christians who are already saved, he was not demonstrating love and was not giving it value. I understand when someone says that to love is a choice. For those already saved, it is, but for those who are not saved yet, it is impossible to have

it. They still need to be reached by the love of God. The parable in Matthew 25:31-46, which speaks about reaching out to 'the least of these' as Jesus said, is intended for believers. It refers to what is expected of believers.

With all that I have said, my purpose is not to promote human love. If we examine it closely, that kind of love always has self-interest attached to it and an expectation of reward. In contrast, the love of God is pure and not selfish because it reflects His heart. The reward for such love comes from God.

About the Author



Ivan Chamurliiev is a Christian who firmly believes in the Bible as God's Word, the new birth in the believer's life—which comes through repentance and accepting Christ—the regeneration the Holy Spirit produces, and the necessity of a person to commune with other believers.

He lives in Italy, where he volunteers in a non-profit organization to reach people through the gospel in different areas of life, but mainly those who are homeless, struggling with addictions, and excluded from society as he also was, but recovered and received a new life through the faith in God.

He spends his time sharing the message, which he firmly believes transformed him, and writing blog posts on Christianity and different theological topics.

Leave a review

If you enjoyed this book or found it useful, you are welcome to leave a review on Amazon.com or the store where you purchased it from. This will support me and help the book to reach other people too. I'll also be glad to hear your opinion on the topic.

Other books by the author

[Common questions about God and the Bible: The most common and often controversial questions about God and the Bible](#)

[Fear of Failure: A Biblical Perspective to Rising Above Our Failures](#)

[Practical Eschatology and Signs of the End times: A sober view of what could happen in the coming days](#)