Christianity is so easy to get into. Salvation is just as simple as the “ABC’s.” All you have to do is Accept, Believe and Confess. However, after salvation Christianity becomes complicated. There are so many rules, rituals and regulations. The salvation that was so simple becomes complex. As a result of these complications, many Christians who really love God become discouraged with the Church and often leave or become passive about their faith.

People need something simple that they can remember, live and share with others. This book makes the Christian lifestyle just as simple as one, two, three. Love God. Love Yourself. Love Everybody Else. It’s Just That Simple! This message of love provides all people with the opportunity to be whole and it empowers believers to live holistically healthy, balanced and well-rounded lives.

DORAL R. PULLEY celebrates over 30 years of ministry and is the Presiding Prelate of Church of the Everlasting Kingdom, a network of covenant local assemblies who embrace accountability, spirituality and excellence. He is a licensed Clinical Professional Counselor and the author of two other books: The Life Model for Spiritual Direction: A Guide to Establishing Mental Health Ministries and Redefining Relationships for the 21st Century. He is also known across the country for his preaching, teaching and training in Kingdom Principles, Church Protocol and Five-fold Ministry. He is the father of three children: Brittney, Courtney and Doral II. They reside in Baltimore, Maryland.

“Wow! A balanced book; scripturally based but practical.” SISTER JOHN FRANCIS SCHILLING, OSP

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“Finally the simple message of God has been simply put, shared and explained. 1-2-3, it's all about LOVE.” RONALD W. DOUGLASS, JR.

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DORAL R. PULLEY

IT'S JUST THAT SIMPLE!
It’s Just That Simple!


DORAL R. PULLEY

UNLOCKING THE SIMPLICITY OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE
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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my natural children:
Brittney, Courtney and Doral II.

The three of you have shown me so much love. I am proud to be your dad. Thanks for your open and honest critique of the simple concept. It made me dig a little deeper and seek God’s face a little more for clarity. I appreciate you reading and editing the book. As a father, all that I have ever tried to teach or show you is wrapped up in this book. I hope I made it simple enough for you.

I also dedicate this book to my spiritual children who have allowed me to teach, train and nurture you on your path of holistic growth and development. To all of you who have stuck with me through thick and thin, I love you and am grateful for your love, prayers and support. To all of you who have left and come back, sometimes we have to leave home to really appreciate what we have. Now that you are back, it is time to embrace the principles of the kingdom and move to the next dimension of your destiny. To all of you who have yet to return, whenever you are ready, I will be right here with open arms of love, ready to receive you. “It’s just that simple.”
INTRODUCTION

Christianity is so easy to get into. The Church has learned to simplify the deep theological concepts of salvation into the “ABCs.” All you have to do is Accept, Believe and Confess (Romans 10:9-10). Accept Jesus Christ as your Savior. Believe that He died on the cross for your sins and that He rose again the third day. Confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord and you are saved. Your sins are forgiven, you are a new creature and you have a brand new start (II Corinthians 5:17). It’s Just That Simple!

However, after salvation Christianity becomes complicated. The Church has so many rules, rituals and regulations. There are so many different doctrines, dogmas and denominations. There are so many questions and not enough time for all the answers. The salvation that was so simple becomes complex. As a result of these complications, many Christians who really love God become discouraged with the Church and often leave or become passive about their faith. People need something simple that they can remember, live and share with others.

God has given me a mandate to make the Christian lifestyle just as simple as the “ABCs” of salvation. Based on the scriptures, maintaining your relationship with God is as simple as one, two, three. Love God. Love Yourself. Love Everybody Else. It’s Just That Simple!

Writing this book is one of the first steps to fulfilling the mandate.
Chapter One: Simplifying Love gives us a working definition for the word, love, and clarifies why the order of love is so important. Chapter Two: With All My Heart describes how God really wants to be loved and provides us with practical ways of determining how much we really love God. Chapter Three: Me, Myself and I explains the importance of self-love and teaches us how to put it in proper perspective and balance it in relation to loving God and loving other people. Chapter Four: Are You Sure It Means Everyone Else? addresses our challenges to love particular people and shows us how to overcome those barriers that hinder us from truly loving everyone. Chapter Five: Light and Easy explains how easy it is to love God, love yourself and love everyone else when we allow Christ to love through us as opposed to us trying to do it by ourselves.

I came to this earth to live, preach, teach, write and promote this simple message, “Love God. Love Yourself. Love Everyone Else.” I have discovered that this is the purpose for which I was born. This message of love provides all people with the opportunity to be whole and it empowers believers to live holistically healthy, balanced and well-rounded lives.

I need your help. I can not proclaim this message to the entire world by myself. I need people who believe this word to help me get it out to every one who will receive it. We must utilize every possible resource that God has made available to human beings to communicate this good news of God’s love.

DORAL R. PULLEY
Baltimore, Maryland
2008
IT’S JUST THAT SIMPLE!
I. SIMPLIFYING LOVE

DESCRIBING GOD’S LOVE

The whole idea of love is challenging to describe for so many people. There are so many different types of love and so many ideas come to mind when we attempt to define what love is. Therefore, in order to fully understand what love is we have to focus on the originator of love and how He loves us.

God Is Love

GOD IS LOVE (I John 4:8). There are four simple, but powerful words that describe this divine love in human terms. The four words are perfect, unconditional, everlasting and universal. God’s love is perfect, unconditional, everlasting and universal. This statement is one that should be repeated over and over again.

God’s Love is Perfect

GOD’S LOVE IS PERFECT. Perfect means that it is complete, whole, lacking nothing, unable to be improved. God’s perfect love affirms that there is nothing that we can do to make God love us any more than He already loves us. Therefore, we can stop trying to earn “brownie” points with God through our righteous deeds. There is no such thing as “God
loving us more” because His love is already perfect.

The concept of perfect love also confirms that there is nothing that we can do to make God love us any less than He already loves us. Just as God’s love can not be increased through acts of righteousness, it can not be decreased through acts of sin. Therefore, we do not have to live in fear of God not loving us as much because we sin or fall short of His glory. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9).”

Human beings are imperfect; therefore, we are incapable of expressing perfect love at all times. Therefore, only from God can we experience perfect love without interruptions. Because we have not experienced perfect uninterrupted love from our parents, spouses, children, teachers, friends or any other human being, it is difficult for us to comprehend the “width, depth, height and length of God’s love (Ephesians 3:17-19).” Since it is beyond our comprehension, all we can do is accept God’s love, receive it into ourselves, and attempt to manifest it to others.

**God’s Love is Unconditional**

In addition to God’s love being perfect, God’s love is unconditional. Unconditional means that it is without conditions or not predicated on something or someone else. There is nothing that we have done or can do to earn God’s love. We do not affect it at all. God’s love is independent of us. He does not even need us to love Him in return for Him to love us. Whether we love God or not, He will always love us because His love is unconditional.

God’s love is not based on our current condition, state or behavior.
God does not wait until we get ourselves together to love us. “God dem-
onstrates His love toward us that while we were yet sinners, Christ died
for us (Romans 5:8).” He loves us as we are and His love transforms us
into what He created us to be.

As humans, we often think of love as a feeling or a strong emotion.
Love is really not an emotion at all; it is a decision. Love is a decision to
unconditionally accept someone or something. Each day we choose to
accept God or to reject Him based upon the things that He allows to hap-
pen in our lives. Each day we choose to accept ourselves or to reject our-
selves based on the things that we think, say or do. Each day we choose to accept
others or reject them based on who they are or what they do. When we decide to
accept God, ourselves and others no mat-
ter what, we are living a lifestyle of love.

SIMPLY PUT!

*Love is really not an emotion at all; it is a DECISION.*

**God’s Love is Everlasting**

Another word to describe God’s love is everlasting. Everlasting
means that it has no beginning and no ending. Since God is everlasting
and love is indicative of God’s nature and character, God’s love is ever-
lasting. There is no point at which God started loving us and there will
be no point at which God will stop loving us. God’s love has always
been and will always be.

There is no person, time, space or life circumstance that can separate
us from God’s everlasting love. Like Paul, “I am persuaded that neither
death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things pre-
sent, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature
shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord (Romans 8:35-39).”

God’s Love is Universal

The fourth word that simplifies God’s love is universal. Universal means that it is not restricted or limited to a certain group. God’s love is for everyone. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).” Jesus died for everyone as an expression of God’s universal love for humanity.

Therefore, the gospel or the good news of God’s love is for everybody. “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15).” There is no one who is not loved by God. God loves everybody, regardless of race, class, gender, socio-economic status, educational level, sexual orientation, religion, creed, nationality, physical features, or any other distinction. It is God’s perfect, unconditional, everlasting, and universal love that empowers us to love ourselves and to build healthy relationships with others.

The Order of Love

The order of love is controversial and people often debate about how love should be prioritized. Some feel that we should love ourselves first, God second, and then others. However, we are not the originators of love; God is. Without God, there would be no one and nothing to love. As His creation, God loved us first and initiates relationship with us. “It is He that made us and not we ourselves (Psalms 100:3).” Therefore, in
return we must love Him first because He is responsible for our very existence.

Whenever we put ourselves first or above God, it is dangerous. It opens the door for the extremes of selfishness and self-centeredness. Loving God first gives us a definition and standard for what love looks like. Loving God first puts things in perspective and keeps us balanced in relationship with ourselves and others.

Others feel that we should love God first, others second and ourselves last. I felt this way for the first twenty-five years of my life, until I took a plane ride with my twin daughters to California. Before we took off, the flight attendant said, “if we lose cabin pressure, the oxygen mask will drop from the ceiling. Put it over your nose and mouth and although it is not inflating you are still receiving oxygen. If you have small children, the elderly, or disabled with you, put the oxygen mask on yourself first and then assist those with you.”

I thought to myself, “Oh no, I want my babies to get the oxygen first. If something happens, let them live and I will die.” But God said to me on the plane, “if you don’t get the oxygen first, all of you will die.” Love is that oxygen that we must breath or we will become unconscious and eventually die spiritually, emotionally and possibly physically. Unless we are breathing properly and getting the proper flow of oxygen ourselves, we are unable to help those in need.

Putting others before ourselves limits our ability to really live a lifestyle of love. Love is something that we decide to give. We are unable to
give what we do not have. It is from our well of love for God and love for self that we are able to pour out love for everyone else. When we are empty and feeling unloved, it makes it challenging to love others. When we are in the proper love relationship with God and ourselves, it makes it simple to love others. Even those who are different from us or those who are not loving toward us. Therefore, I follow the precedent that Jesus set in Matthew 22:37-40, I believe that we should love God first, ourselves second, and others third.

The Standards Set by the Ten Commandments

In the early stages of the children of Israel becoming a nation after their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, God gave Moses standards which would guide their relationship with Him and with one another. These standards found in Exodus 20:1-17 are commonly known as the Ten Commandments. They are:

♥ Do not have any other gods before me.
♥ Do not make any graven images.
♥ Do not use the name of the Lord in vain.
♥ Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.
♥ Honor your father and your mother.
♥ Do not kill.
♥ Do not commit adultery.
♥ Do not steal.
♥ Do not bear false witness.
♥ Do not covet.

The first four commandments speak to relationship with God and
the last six commandments speak to relationship with others.

*Jesus Revisits the Commandments from Sinai*

In response to a young lawyer’s question, which is the great commandment, Jesus condensed the Ten Commandments into two commandments, “Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37).” Both of Jesus’ commandments start with the word, love. He used the word, love, to fulfill the entire Old Testament law and to summarize all that prophets spoke about (Galatians 5:13).

Jesus’ first command was to “Love the Lord your God…” Instead of telling the young man what he should not do, he told him what to do: Love God. If a person loves God with the intensity of all of his heart, mind, soul and strength, then he will observe the first four of the Ten Commandments.

Jesus’ second command was to “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Again Jesus uses the positive command of love instead of the list of “shall nots.” Certainly, if a person loves her neighbor as herself, she will not kill, commit adultery, steal, lie or covet.

The Church must follow Jesus’ example and teach people what to do instead of just giving them a list of things they should not do.

**The Third Commandment**

Although Jesus did not explicitly say, “love your selves second,” He gives strong implications of the concept of self-love. I call it the third commandment. It was assumed in Jewish culture that everyone loved
him or her self. That’s why Jesus was able to compare the love of others to the love of one’s self using the word, as.

Paul, the apostle, who was raised in Judaism confirms this assumption of self-love in his commands to husbands, “Husbands love your wives as your own body. For no one ever hates his own flesh for he nourishes and cherishes it (Ephesians 5:28-29).” Self-love was so natural to Jews that it was a foreign or inconceivable thought that a person would not love himself.

“Love Yourself” was so understood as a part of the fabric of their culture that it was not stated. However, today’s culture is somewhat different than Jewish culture. Therefore, what was presumed about self-love in both Judaism and Judeo-Christianity needs to be explicitly stated as a command today, “Love Yourself.” Thus, the proper order of love, stated plainly and simplified for everyone to understand is “Love God. Love Yourself. Love Everyone Else.”

THE WHOLENESS OF LOVE

It is in our attempt to understand God’s love for us and to love God in return that He teaches us how to truly love ourselves and to love everyone else. When we love in that order: God, self and everyone else, we are whole. Love completes us and allows us to live in a state where nothing is missing, nothing is broken and nothing is out of place. To delete any one of those three dimensions of love, would mean that the circle of love would not be complete.
II.

WITH ALL MY HEART

In the English language, we only have one word to describe our intense feelings of affection and devotion. It is the word, love. We use the same word, love, for everybody and everything. I love God. I love basketball. I love my spouse. I love ice cream. I love my children. I love my job. By using the same word, it makes it difficult to distinguish the depth of love or the type of love that we are referring to.

In the Greek language, there are four different words for love. Agape is unconditional love and it is reserved for the love relationship between God and humanity. Storge is the love for family and it is reserved for people who are in relationship because of blood, marriage or law. Eros is the erotic or romantic love and it is reserved for people who are sexually and physically attracted to each other. Philia is brotherly love and it is reserved for friends, people whom we choose to be in relationship with because of personality similarities and common interests.

Therefore, when Jesus gives His first command in Matthew 22:37, “love the Lord your God with all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength” He is speaking of a special love relationship that can only exist between a Creator and His creation. No other person or thing gets this type of love or intensity. The only One who can love us unconditionally and perfectly at all times is God. The only One whom we can love un-
conditionally is God. When we love God with all of our hearts, no matter what God allows to happen in our lives, our love for Him does not decrease.

In Jesus’ depiction of this agape relationship with God, the heart is not divided into two parts wherein God gets the largest portion and then the rest of the heart is equally divided into love for self and love for our neighbors. Jesus is clear that loving God the way that He wants to be loved has to be done “with all your heart.” Therefore, our love for ourselves and our love for our neighbors flows out of our love for God.

The first four commands that God gave to Moses to give to the children of Israel gave specific instructions about how Jehovah wants to be worshipped (Exodus 20:1-17). He wants to be worshipped singularly. “Do not have any other gods before me.” He wants to be worshipped spiritually. “Do not make any graven images.” He wants to be worshipped reverently. “Do not use the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” He wants to be worshipped regularly. “Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.” Jesus summarized these four commands into one word, love. If we love the Lord, we will worship Him singularly, spiritually, reverently and regularly.

**Worship Singularity**

The simplest form of worship begins with accepting the idea of God. “Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).” In generations past, it was easier to witness
and to share our faith because God was “a given” for most people. Neverthe-
theless, as we continue to advance in education, science and technol-
ogy, more and more people are struggling with belief in God independent
of themselves, his omnipotence and absolute truth.

Yes, God exists in each of His creations and He has given us power
and authority to reign on the earth. Nevertheless, God also exists outside
of us and is independent of us. The existence of God is not based on our
belief in Him or our need for Him. We did not create God, God created
us. It is “in Him we live and move and have our being...we are His off-
spring (Acts 17:28).”

This independent God who exists without anyone else’s assistance is
also omnipotent. He is all powerful. He is greatest power in the universe.
He is also omnipresent, filling all time and space simultaneously. He is
omniscient, all seeing and all knowing. There is a higher power. There is
something and someone bigger than we are whose standards we must
follow.

Our omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient God is love. “He that
does not love, does not know not God; for God is love (I John 4:8).” He
is the initiator of love and He is interested in being in a loving committed
monogamous relationship with us. “Herein is love, not that we loved
God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for
our sins.”

We must love the virtue of love. We must love to manifest love be-
cause love is the rule by which He created and rules the world. There-
fore, love is the absolute truth and love is the standard and governing
principle by which we are called to live our lives. Love God. Love your-
When we love God the way that He wants to be loved, we will worship Him singularly. Sometimes our desire for power, money, relationship and fame is so strong that we are tempted to create and worship false gods in order to obtain things immediately. In the wilderness, Jesus, the son of God, was tempted with worshipping another god. His response was “for it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.’ (Matthew 4:10).”

Jehovah does not want to be just one of the gods that we worship. He does not even want to be the first god that we worship among others gods. Jehovah wants to be our only God. He wants our love for Him to be so intense that our love for everything and everyone else looks like hatred in comparison. Jesus knew about the distinct love that God requires and warned potential followers “if anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:26).”

WORSHIP SPIRITUALLY

The children of Israel were often tempted by idolatry because the other nations worshipped gods that they could see and touch in a very physical way or at least had graven images of their gods. Although Jehovah would manifest Himself in tangible ways through miracles, signs and wonders, He wanted a spiritual relationship with His people. He wanted
a relationship with them that was not limited to their human understanding or finite perceptions of Him.

In the Second Commandment that He gave to Moses, He vehemently spoke against images assisting Israel in their worship. “Do not make any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Do not bow down to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD your God am a jealous God (Exodus 20:4-5).”

Today, Jehovah still calls us to worship Him spiritually. “God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).” There is no image or symbol that we could create that would truly be representative of our God. He is beyond our imagination and “He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we could ask or think (Ephesians 3:20).”

**WORSHIP REVERENTLY**

A part of our worship is reverence for God. The reverence that God requires is respect and honor, not fear and terror. He does not want us to be afraid of Him. He wants us to have a healthy relationship with Him where we can communicate with Him. We can’t learn His principles and grow at our own pace if we are scared of God.

God seeks worship and demands obedience. But He does not want our worship and obedience to be motivated by fear of hell, judgment or damnation. He wants us to serve Him because we love Him. “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love (I John 4:18).”
Love is the most powerful force in the universe. Love is greater than fear, shame or guilt. Love is more powerful than fear. Fear as a motive for worship and obedience does not last long. Fear of consequences is not enough to sustain change. Eventually the fear will wear off and we will conform to old ways of thinking, speaking and behaving.

God wants us to love Him enough to honor His name. The third commandment that God gave to Moses is “do not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.” When we love the Lord with all of our hearts, we will not use His name in vain. Honoring His name is more than reverencing what we call Him, “Jehovah.” It means to avoid profanity and to respect His power and authority over our lives.

God wants us to love Him enough to obey His word, His commandments, His principles, His precepts and His instructions. Nevertheless, in order to have a better understanding of what God is saying to us so that we can truly obey Him, we must read, study and research the scriptures. Proverbs 4:7 states, “Get wisdom. Get knowledge but with all thy getting, get understanding.” When you really love someone you take time to understand what he or she is saying to you.

“If you love me, keep my commandments (John 14:15).” We all have different opinions about what is right and what is wrong. Due to our reverence for God, His word and His voice becomes our final authority. Our obedience is not based on our logic or other people’s support. Our love for God compels us to do what He says.
WORSHIP REGULARLY

The fourth command that God gave to Moses to give to the children of Israel is:

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days will thou labor, and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it don’t do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it (EXODUS 20:8-11).”

In Jewish culture, weekly there was a day that was reserved for God; it was sacred. This was a day that the Jews rested from their regular occupations so that they could worship God. The practice of the Sabbath may be different today because we live in a different society but the principle remains the same. Our worship can not be sporadic; it must be a regular part of our schedules. There must be a time that we set aside for God for the specific purpose of individual and corporate worship.

Worshipping as an Individual

Our individual worship is daily. Our love for God motivates us to worship Him regularly. We cannot love Him and not want to spend time with Him every day. Each day we must spend some time with God. This time could be reading/studying the scriptures, praying, singing, journaling, meditating, a combination of spiritual exercises or anything that brings us closer to God. Individual worship is about communicating with God and being honest with him about where you are, what you need and allowing God to speak back to you. It is not so much what we
do during this individual worship time as it is that we carve out this time for intimacy with God.

Some of us call this individual worship: daily devotions or quiet time. The times that we do it may differ based on our personality and availability. It may be the first thing in the morning for the “early birds.” It may be the last thing at night for “night owls.” Regardless of how we label it or when we do it, it must be a part of our day.

Worshipping with a Body of Believers

Based on the pattern of the early church, our corporate worship is at least weekly. We certainly are not limited to once a week. Some of us participate in individual, as well as, corporate worship daily. Nevertheless, individual worship is not a substitute for corporate worship and neither is corporate worship a replacement for individual worship. Both our individual and corporate worship must be regular. There are things that we gain from individual worship that we may not receive from corporate worship. There also things that we receive from worshipping with fellow believers that we don’t receive when we are alone with God.

God calls us to worship with our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ. “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them (Matthew 18:20).” It is essential that we are connected to a local assembly and participate in the weekly corporate worship experience for the purposes of fellowship, learning, utilizing our gifts and talents, encouragement and support.

Our worship of God is about being in relationship with God. As we love God the way that He wants to be loved by worshipping Him singularly, spiritually, reverently and regularly, we come into agreement with
God, trust Him and keep falling in love with Him over and over again.

AGREEMENT WITH GOD

Many of us are having major challenges in our relationship with God because we really don’t agree with God. We disagree with God as it relates to His will for our lives. Our view of ourselves and others is totally different from the way God sees it. In order to have a healthy relationship with God, we must agree with Him. “Can two walk together, except they agree (Amos 3:3)?”

We have to come into total harmony with God’s will for our lives. Sometimes our will and God’s will are not the same. Sometimes what we want is not what God wants for us. If our will and God’s will are in conflict, then we have to trust God’s judgment over our own. We have to pray as Jesus did “nevertheless not as I will but your will be done” until we can accept and agree with God’s will (Matthew 26:39). Agree with God’s word. Agree with God’s purpose and plan. Agree with God’s principles and practices. Agree with God.

Not only is God calling us into agreement with his will for our lives, He calls us to be in agreement with His love for us. God loves us perfectly and unconditionally. God’s love for us is universal and everlasting. It is not a sin for us to love ourselves. In fact, when we love ourselves, we come into agreement with God’s love for us. When we are not exhibiting healthy self-love, then we are in disagreement with God. Stop fighting God’s love for you. Stop sabotaging God’s blessings for you. Agree with God and love yourself as He does.

Just as we are called to come into agreement with God’s love for us
by loving ourselves, God is calling us to come into agreement with His love for all of His creation. We are called to love the earth, nature, animals and all of God’s creations because “the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness, thereof, the world and they that dwell therein (Psalms 24:1).” We are also called to love all people because they are “made in his image and after his likeness (Genesis 1:26).” When we love our neighbors as ourselves, we are in agreement with God’s love for them. When we do not love everybody, we are in disagreement with God. Life is so much better when we are in agreement with God.

**SIMPLY PUT!**

*Life is so much better when we are in agreement with God.*

**TRUST GOD**

In relationships, we can not have love without trust. Not only does God want us to love Him and agree with Him, but He also wants us to trust Him. We must trust that God’s will for us is always best. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding. In all of your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your path (Proverbs 3:5-7).” God loves us and wants the best for us. He has our best interest at heart. He is not against us, God is for us. He knows our future and is working “all things together for the good [because] we love Him and have been called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).”

When we are in crisis, we do not see why God allows painful events to occur in our lives. Later, we learn the lesson and appreciate the situation as a blessing. Despite our limited view of the situation, He just wants us to be patient and trust His process for our lives.
To maintain trust in God, there are times when we have to forgive God. Not that God has actually done anything wrong but sometimes we feel that He has or that He has abandoned us. Like Jesus, there are life circumstances when we cry out “my God, my God, why have you forsaken me (Matthew 27:46)?” To forgive God means simply to let it go and trust God.

When things work out differently than we would like them to, let it go and trust God. When God does not answer our prayers with the “yes” that we would like, but instead tells us “no” or “wait” we must let it go and trust Him. When our understanding does not comprehend why God has allowed various things to happen, let it go and trust Him. When we fail to let these things go, it hinders our relationship with God and makes it difficult to trust and obey Him in future situations.

**FALLING IN LOVE WITH GOD**

Love is the most powerful force in the universe. I believe that people do not benefit from being weighed down with rules and regulations. Rather, people should be allowed to fall in love with God. Allowing individuals the time and the space to really love the Lord with all their hearts, mind, soul and strength is what Jesus encourages. When we fall in love with God like that, then we will do whatever it takes to please Him and we will be joyous about it.

“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous (I John 5:3).” Without love for God, the worship that God requires of us becomes a burden. It becomes a chore, just one more thing that we have to remember to do. When we
love God the way He wants to be loved, our motive for obedience is not fear or duty; but love. This love becomes the energy that fuels our relationship with God, a contagious phenomenon that spreads to every area of our lives and to everyone whom we meet.

**Love God Checklist - I Love God**

| ♥ | I accept the very idea of God. |
| ♥ | Jehovah is my only God; I have no idols. |
| ♥ | My worship of God is without graven images. |
| ♥ | I honor His name. |
| ♥ | I read, study and research the scriptures. |
| ♥ | I obey His Word. |
| ♥ | I have daily individual worship. |
| ♥ | I have weekly corporate worship. |
| ♥ | I agree with God’s will and purpose for my life. |
| ♥ | I trust God in all of life’s circumstances. |

IT’S JUST THAT SIMPLE!
When Jesus gave His second command, He did not just say, “Love your neighbor.” He quantified the idea of loving your neighbor with the prepositional phrase, “as yourself.” This shows us that we can only love others to the extent that we love ourselves.

*These Three Words*

Think about the words, I love you. Repeat these three words over and over again. How many times have we said them to other people? How long have we longed to hear someone say them to us? I love you.

Let’s dissect this popular phrase. The first word in the phrase is “I”. Before we get to the “love you,” we must first exam the “I” who is making the statement about loving you. If the man who is making the statement, “I love you,” does not love himself, then there is no way he can love you. If the woman who is making the statement “I love you,” does not love herself, then it is impossible for her to love you. If the person making the statement “I love you,” only loves himself a little, then he will only be able to love you a little. If the person making statement “I love you,” loves herself a lot, then she has the potential to love you a lot.
Self-love is essential to our individual holistic growth and development. It is a process that has a profound impact on our relationships with others. There are three major aspects of self-love: self-knowledge, self-acceptance and self-care. In order for us to love ourselves, we have to first know ourselves. After having a good understanding of who we are, then we have to accept “the who” that we discover. Self-acceptance then becomes the motivator of self-care.

**SELF-KNOWLEDGE**

The first dimension of self-love is self-knowledge. We can only love ourselves to the extent that we know ourselves. We are ever evolving and unfolding beings. Therefore, the journey of self-knowledge never ends. Once we think we know ourselves, we grow, develop and change.

*Psychoanalyst Eric Erikson*

According to Erikson and his eight stages of development, during early and middle adolescence, we experience an individuation process wherein we separate from our parents and primary caregivers to find out who we are apart from them. During late adolescence and early adulthood, we engage in a discovery process wherein we try on certain behaviors and lifestyles to see what fits us. Although we do not completely know ourselves, by early to middle adulthood, our identity crisis should be somewhat resolved and we should have a good grasp of who we are (Erikson, 1968).
**Spending Time Alone**

One of the best ways to get to know ourselves is through self-intimacy, spending quality time with ourselves. We often use our roles and responsibilities to avoid being alone. As long as we have the crowd of others and the noise of the world, we do not have to listen to what is going on inside of ourselves.

It is good to just spend some time alone. This time needs to be without family, without friends, without fellow believers, without co-workers and without classmates. This alone time can be sitting quietly, meditating, writing in a journal, reading a book, going to dinner, taking an elongated bath or shower or going to the movies alone. This alone time gives us an opportunity to reflect and discover our own thoughts and feelings without the influence and interruption of others. It does not matter how long the time is. It could begin with as little as five minutes a day. The more time we spend alone, the more we enjoy being alone. Eventually, we fall in love with the wonder of who we are.

**DRAWING YOUR OWN L.I.N.E.**

Self-intimacy will provide us with a lot of information about ourselves and we will be able to draw our own L.I.N.E. L.I.N.E. is an acronym for **Limitations, Issues, Needs** and **Expertise**. In mathematics, a line sets boundaries and shows length. In life, our line says, “I am comfortable with who I am and I know exactly where I am.”
Limitations

Only God is limitless. God empowers us to do some things. As individuals we can only do what God has enabled us to do. Whatever God has not enabled us to do is a limitation. **Limitations** cause us to be interdependent, realizing that we need others. As we mature we accept our limitations and build relationships with people who are gifted in the areas in which we ourselves are limited.

Identifying the ISSUE

In addition to us being able to recognize our limitations, we also must be in tune with our own **issues**. Issues are those areas of our lives on which we are working to be our best selves. When I think about issues, I think about the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5:21-34). Her issue was physical but it was such a part of her life that it affected her finances and quality of life. She could not continue life without addressing this issue. Her issue drove her to her knees. Her issue drew her to Christ, and caused her to reach out and touch Him in pursuit of healing and wholeness.

Each of us has at least one issue in our lives. It could be physical, mental, emotional or spiritual. However, there is an **ISSUE (Identified Situation Stretching Us Effectively)** in our lives that we must deal with. The issue is designed to move us from where we are to where God wants us to be. It could be time management, anger or an incident that happened in the past that we have yet to overcome.

This **identified situation** that God has allowed into our lives is to stretch us and to stimulate our growth. Sometimes this growth or **stretching** will manifest a renewed understanding of God’s will. Other times
the effectiveness of our issue is God’s way of expanding our conceptual reality of our selves. Ultimately, issues reveal to us our triumphant victory over what seems to be insurmountable or impossible.

Whatever the issue is, we have to identify it and work through it so that we can be all that God has created us to be and receive all that God has for us. No matter how painful or embarrassing it may be, we must face it so that we can continue on the path of wholeness.

Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

According to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, all human beings have the same basic needs: physiological, safety, love, self-esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1966). Our physiological needs include our need for air, food, water, clothing and shelter. Safety is our need to feel like our world, our communities and our homes are safe places. Having the safety need met allows us to leave our homes and go to work with the feeling that we can travel back and forth without hurt, harm or danger. It is also the feeling that our possessions will be safe while we are absent.

Unless our physiological needs are met and we feel safe, we are not able to experience love and belonging. Love and belonging is in the middle of Maslow’s pyramid. The need for love is our need to feel like people know us and accept us unconditionally. This decision to love us, displayed by someone outside of our self, brings about a sense of belonging. Belonging is the need to be accepted by at least one person. It is the feeling that we fit into a group. Whether that group is a group of family members, friends or fellow church members, all of us need to feel like we belong to someone or something. We need to feel like our presence makes a difference and that we would be missed if we were not there.
When the decision of love is not shared with us or we do not feel as though we belong we often become depressed and suicidal.

**Self-Esteem**

Another basic need of all human beings is self-esteem. Once our physical needs are met, we feel safe, and we know that we are loved and belong, we are then free to do things that manifest our abilities and creativity. When we do a good job or create something, we feel good about ourselves. Feeling good about ourselves and what we can do is called self-esteem.

Our abilities make us feel good about ourselves. Think about children. Each time they are able to do something like tie their shoes, go to the bathroom without assistance, or get dressed, they feel good about themselves and want to be celebrated for their accomplishments. This is a part of human nature. We feel good about the contributions that we can make to all the systems of which we are a part. Some of the systems include our family, our job, our church, our school, our community and our world. We feel good when we can positively influence these systems.

However, sometimes we are not able to make the same contributions that we were able to in the past due to illness, old age, lifestyle change or some other tragic situation. During these times, we should be able to pull from our resources of love and belonging. So that even when we cannot make the same types of contributions we know that we are loved and belong, not because of what we are able to do but because of who we are. This love and belonging empowers us to discover new ways to make contributions and to be satisfied with these new extensions of our selves.
Self-Actualization: The Road to Destiny

The highest level of human need is self-actualization. Self-actualization is our need to help others on a global level. Self-actualization can only occur when our physical, safety, love and belonging and self-esteem needs are met. Then, and only then, are we able to focus on meeting the needs of others. Self-actualization is rooted in health and wholeness; it does not come from an unhealthy need to be needed. Self-actualization is when time and purpose come together and we fulfill our destiny. Self-actualization is the fulfilling of the purpose for which we came into existence. Through self-actualization, we accomplish the mission we were born to fulfill.

Many of us are stuck at the bottom of the pyramid trying to get lower level needs met. When we are consumed with what we are going to eat, what we are going to wear, where we are going to live, whether or not we are going to be safe, if anybody will love us, or if we can do anything well- we are not able to think on a global level of changing our world for the good. That is why Jesus said, “Take no thought for your life, what you will eat, or what you will drink; nor for your body, what you will put on. Is not your life more than meat, and the body than raiment? (Matthew 6:28).”

Know Your Areas of Expertise

In addition to knowing our limitations, our issues, and our needs, we also need to know our areas of expertise. Expertise is the things in which God has enabled us to do well. God endows each one of His creatures with various abilities and talents, which are called gifts. It is important for us to recognize and articulate these areas of expertise for the greater
good of all. The world suffers when we fail to utilize the expertise that God has given us. Knowing our expertise allows our L.I.N.E. to be complete and it gives us a balanced sense of who we are.

Drawing our L.I.N.E. is a simple way for us to express our self-knowledge. The L.I.N.E. provides us with a way to separate our limitations, issues, needs and expertise from others. It also helps us to establish positive boundaries so that our relationships are healthy and interdependent as opposed to being dysfunctional and co-dependent.

**SIMPLY PUT!**

*The world suffers when we fail to utilize the expertise that God has given us.*

**SELF-ACCEPTANCE**

After knowing ourselves and being able to draw our own line, we must be able to accept what we learn about ourselves. Love is unconditional acceptance. Self-acceptance is accepting all of who we are; body, soul and spirit. Self-acceptance is accepting all of who we are; past, present and future. Self-acceptance is accepting all of who we are; good and evil, light as well as dark.

*Accepting Our Bodies*

Accepting our bodies is accepting that we are made in God’s image and after His likeness. Most of us have some part of our bodies that we wish we could change. Some of us invest large sums of money into cosmetic surgery to look a certain way. Nevertheless, it is important for us to get to the point in our lives where we can say like David, “I am fear-
fully and wonderfully made (Psalms 139:14).” Therefore, there is no need to compare ourselves with others, to be envious of how someone else looks or jealous of the gifts that someone else possesses. We are all unique expressions of God in the earth.

One day I was waiting in line to be seated in a restaurant and a gentleman behind me said that he was so dissatisfied with his body that he attempted to make a person out of clay. Through the process, he realized how difficult it was to make a person and quit. He began to worship God out of appreciation. He finally understood all of the intricacies that it takes to make a person and accepted that he was created the way that God wanted him to be.

Accepting Our Emotions and Intellect

Accepting our soul translates to accepting our emotions and our intellectual abilities. Our emotions are gifts from God and we must give ourselves permission to feel the way that we do. Emotions are not right or wrong; they just are. We must embrace our emotions and learn what they are trying to teach us. Our feelings warn us of danger and if used positively, give us energy to accomplish things.

Not only has God given us feelings, but He has also given every person a measure of intelligence. Through maturity we learn to balance our emotions and our intellect. Intelligence is the ability to process, learn and retain information.

Everyone’s intellectual capabilities are different. Some people excel
with mathematics and science. Some people are auditory learners. Some are visual learners. Others are kinesthetic learners or a combination of all three. We must release ourselves from the negative words that have been spoken into the atmosphere about us by family, friends, “well-wishers”, enemies, and even ourselves. We must renounce the idea that we are dumb because we seem to learn at a slower pace than someone else. We must reject the concept that we are stupid because we have to ask several questions and work diligently to grasp material. God is all intelligence and he gives each of us a measure of that intelligence. Use the intelligence that God has given you and free yourself from negative opposition.

Accepting the God in Us

Accepting who we are spiritually means recognizing that there is a God part of us that we cannot ignore. We are both human and divine. We are both physical and spiritual. We are both natural and supernatural.

God is not only external, filling all time and space, but God is also internal. God lives and abides in each of us. Ephesians 4:6, states that there is “one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” He is just as close to us as our breath.

Balancing All the Parts

Self-acceptance is accepting all of who we are past, present, and future. Our past has shaped us into the persons we are today. Therefore, we no longer have to regret our past mistakes or live in a world of “couldas, shouldas and if onlys.” God has allowed things to happen in
our lives the way that they did to mold us into the people we have become with the wisdom of those past experiences. It is important for us to live in the present moment. The decisions that we make today are making a statement about who we are now. They will be determining factors in the unfolding of our future.

In each new day that God gives us, we are to rejoice in glorious expectation of our future because God already knows the end from the beginning. It is also important for us to invest time, money and energy into our future. We must dream and set realistic obtainable goals for ourselves. Our past, our present and our future are working together so that we can emerge as our best selves.

We all have a part of us that is good and a part of us that is evil. We all have a part of us that is light and a part of us that is dark. We all have a part of us that is positive and a part of us that is negative. Self-acceptance is accepting all of who we are the good and evil, the light and darkness, the positive and negative aspects of our personhood. Self-acceptance is not pretending that we are perfect, but having a balanced perspective of ourselves. Once we accept who we are and where we are in our lives, then we are free and empowered to change our lives for the better.

Because we are imperfect beings, part of self-acceptance is forgiving ourselves. We are going to make poor choices. We are going to make mistakes. We must learn the lessons from these experiences and move on with our lives. Let us not live in regret, shame, guilt and condemnation. Let us love ourselves enough to forgive ourselves, to let it go and to try...
again.

**Self-care**

We can tell when people have decided to love us by the way that they treat us. If a man said he loved his wife but physically abused her, then we would say he does not really love her. If a woman said she loved her children but neglected them, then we would say that she does not really love them. It works the same way with self-love. How can we say that we love ourselves if we fail to take care of ourselves? The true test of self-love is self-care.

*Love through nutrition*

There are several ways to evaluate and demonstrate our love for ourselves. One way is through our eating habits. When we love ourselves we will feed ourselves properly and maintain a healthy weight. Obesity puts a strain on the body and causes it to break down. It is also important that we eat balanced meals, drink plenty of water and discipline ourselves as it relates to foods that have little or no nutritional value. The same discipline that we exhibit in our eating habits will extend to abstaining from other destructive behaviors, words and thoughts.

We must also pay attention to what, when and why we are eating. Sometimes we are so busy rushing that we deny our bodies any nutritional substance. We wait so late to eat that our system lacks the energy to properly digest and break down what we have eaten. Sometimes we take better care of our cars than we do ourselves. Food is one of the fuels that keep our bodies going. It is not good to keep running our bodies on empty. This causes our bodies to “break down” and we get sick.
Love through Rest and Relaxation

It is just as essential that we eat properly as it is that we get our proper rest. A part of understanding yourself is to know how much sleep you need in order to function at your highest potential. Some people need eight hours of sleep. Others need as much as ten and some need as little as six hours of sleep. Whatever the amount is, make sure that you get what you need. It is a critical component of loving yourself and expressing self-care.

When we keep running our bodies like machines and not giving them rest, we are abusing ourselves. When we are tired, we have less energy to be productive and positive. We are easily irritated. We are also more susceptible to sickness and disease. Much of what we call “attacks of the enemy,” can be traced back to our lack of self-care.

I am always amazed at the number of believers who do not know how to relax or have not a clue as to what they find enjoyable. It seems like only a small percentage of Christians have hobbies or things that we do just for fun that are not church related. Some of us say that there is no time to relax. Others of us say it has been so long that we have forgotten how to have fun. It is time to get in touch with ourselves and know what makes us happy. God is responsible for our joy because “the joy of the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10).” However, we are responsible for our happiness.
**Love through Exercise**

Another fuel for the body is **exercise**. One of the best gifts we can give ourselves is exercise. I find it beneficial for me to exercise in the morning. After giving God the firstfruits of my day, I give myself the gift of exercise. Before I can give anything to others, I have to give something to myself.

When compared to the spiritual exercises of godliness and contentment, Paul said, “Physical exercise has little value (I Timothy 4:8).” Nevertheless, it is important to get the value that exercise has to offer. Exercising three times a week for at least thirty minutes each time benefits the body through weight management and an increase in the functioning of cardiovascular system. The adrenaline produced by physical activity also aids in bringing the body to a climax. This height oftentimes aligns the physical and emotional agents we experience daily. Such an alignment promotes a more restful sleep.

Exercise not only benefits the body, but it also benefits the soul and spirit. Exercise is excellent for stress-management and anger-management. It also helps us to relax. Physical exercise can also be combined with the spiritual exercises of meditation, affirmations, prayer and scripture quotations. There are so many ways to use exercise creatively in our lives.

**Love through Self-Preservation**

Another way to express self-care is by getting regular **check-ups** from the doctor and dentist. Many of us really dislike going to the doctor. Going to the doctor does not mean that we cease to trust that God is a
healer. Even if we distrust prescription medicine, we can at least take advantage of modern science and technology to find out what is going on with our bodies. Pretending that symptoms are not present does not make them go away. Self-care may also be going to counseling for a mental or emotional check-up. Sometimes we need a mental health professional to take a look at us. They may see something that we are not able to see because we are too close to the situation.

Love through Celebration
Some of us hunger for attention and praise because we are waiting for people to recognize our worth or celebrate our accomplishments. When we do something good or obtain a goal that we set for ourselves, it is important that we celebrate ourselves. We must treat ourselves. It does not always have to be with food or an expensive purchase or a trip around the world. It can be as simple as a note of celebration or doing something you consider fun or relaxing such as a massage or sporting activity. When we celebrate ourselves, we are making an investment in our self-esteem, self-image and self-worth.

Love through Personal Hygiene ~ Grooming
When we love ourselves, it will not only be evident to you, it will be evident to others. The Bible says, “Man looks on the outward appearance but God looks at the heart (I Samuel 16:7).” It also says, “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father which is in heaven (Matthew 5:16).” Although God looks at the heart, people look on the outward appearance. It is important that our love for ourselves is evident through our personal hygiene and
grooming. We must keep our bodies clean, develop our own style and look our best.

**SELF-DENIAL AND SELFISHNESS**

For many of us it is challenging for us to digest the concept of self-love as a part of Christianity because Jesus said, “if any man will come after me let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow after me (Luke 9:23).” God calls us to a place of self-actualization where we are able to make sacrifices for the greater good. However, many of us who are trying to deny ourselves really lack a well-developed sense of self to deny. It is like asking a person who is homeless and hungry to fast. They are unable to fast because they are already without food. When we try to deny ourselves before we really know who we are, we set ourselves up for failure, mental illness and emotional breakdowns. First, we must discover who we are before we can deny ourselves of privileges for a greater cause.

Self-love is required of every person who wants to live the abundant life that Jesus came to give us. He said, “I’ve come that you might have life and that more abundantly (John 10:10).” When we love God first, ourselves second, and others third, we are not being selfish. We are actually showing love in the proper order, God’s divine order.

*Know the Limitations of Self-Love*

Think about the word, “selfish.” The “ish” at the end sounds like something negative or polluted. It is. Selfishness is the unhealthy ex-
treme of self-love. To be selfish is to love your self to the extreme that God is second or even last in our lives. Selfishness is worshipping ourselves instead of worshipping God and realizing that He is the creator of all things. Without loving God first, the healthy idea of self-love becomes perverted through selfishness and narcissism.

We become selfish when we love ourselves to the extent that we disregard others. It means that we want what we want so bad that we will do whatever necessary to get it, even if that means hurting, harming or even assassinating someone else’s character. The last six commands that God gave to Moses to give to the children of Israel, if obeyed, guarded them against the destructive effects of selfishness (Exodus 20:1-17). It is selfish to dishonor our natural and spiritual parents, to kill, to commit adultery, to steal, to lie and to covet in order to meet our own selfish desires. It is not selfish to demonstrate the self-love that Jesus insinuated in Matthew 22:34-40 through self-knowledge, self-acceptance and self-care.
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<td>♥</td>
<td>I know myself well enough to draw my own L.I.N.E.</td>
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<td>♥</td>
<td>I accept all of who I am.</td>
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<tr>
<td>♥</td>
<td>I eat properly.</td>
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<td>I get my proper rest.</td>
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<td>I take time to relax.</td>
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<td>I exercise regularly.</td>
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<td>I get regular physical and emotional check-ups with professionals.</td>
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<td>I celebrate myself and my accomplishments.</td>
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<td>♥</td>
<td>My concern for my outward appearance is evident through my hygiene and grooming.</td>
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<td>I am not selfish.</td>
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A young lawyer asked Jesus, “what do I have to do to inherit eternal life (Luke 10:25)?” Jesus made it simple for the young man and told him that he only had to do two things. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and love your neighbor as yourself (Luke 10:27)”

Jesus did not explicitly say love everyone else; he used the word, neighbor. The term Jesus used caused the young man to have another question, “who is my neighbor (Luke 10:29)?”

Instead of answering his question directly, Jesus told him the Parable of the Good Samaritan. In the parable, a man was on the road half dead as a result of being robbed and beaten. Three people crossed the man’s path but only the Samaritan stopped to help him. At the end of the story, Jesus allowed the young man to answer his own question and encouraged him to function in the example of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37).

Love Everyone Else!

So that the people of this generation do not have any additional questions about who their neighbors are, I use the simple phrase, “Love
Everyone Else!” This phrase clarifies the “neighbor” term and leaves us without excuse. It makes it clear that our neighbors are not limited to the people who live next door to us or who sit beside us at work or in a class.

Through the Parable of the Good Samaritan, we gain the understanding that our neighbor could be anyone. We have the neighbor experience whenever there is an intersecting of two paths. We are neighbors because at some point along our life journeys, God allowed our paths to cross. God allows us to meet all different types of people in various situations so that we have the opportunity to show them an expression of love. How well we do with these neighbor experiences is determined by how we view people, our general treatment of people and how we deal with people who are different from us.

**DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?**

* A “God’s Eye” View

Just as God calls us to see ourselves as He sees us, He also calls us to see others as He sees them. God sees each person as a son or a daughter “because He Himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth (Acts 17:25-26).” Therefore, we are all God’s children either by creation--the fact that God created us in His image and after His likeness, or by redemption--the fact that we all have sinned and have access to a new beginning by accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Since God is the Father and creator of all of us, we are all brothers and sisters. Therefore, whenever our path crosses that of another person, we are to look at them as one of our siblings.
In addition, to seeing all people as our siblings, in order to love everyone, we must see that we are all connected to each other. The scriptures teach the principle that “we are one body with many members (I Corinthians 12:20).” We all came from the same place. We are all living on the same earth. We are all breathing the same air and need it for our very existence. Whatever we do to others, will in some way affect us eventually. The kingdom principle of sowing and reaping teaches us to “not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows (Galatians 6:7).”

**SIMPLY PUT!**

*Whatever we do to others will in some way affect us eventually.*

**We Are Identically Unique**

We are more alike than we are different. We must focus on our commonalities and not our differences. It makes it easier for us to love everyone else when we remember that we all have something in common physically, emotionally and spiritually. Physically, our bodies are made the same. We all have the same number of organs and bones. We all need food, clothing and shelter for our survival. Emotionally, at some point in life we all experience the same feelings as we face various situations. We all have the same need for love, respect and acceptance of who we are. Spiritually, God dwells in each of us by virtue of our breath. If our spiritual needs are not being met, we all feel like there is something missing in our lives. We share that common thirst for God and spirituality.

Nevertheless, each of us is on an individual journey. No two journeys are exactly the same. Our personalities, family backgrounds, life
experiences and destinies make each journey unique. Although our journeys are different, we are all on the same path, the path towards wholeness. We all make mistakes along this path that we must learn from so that we can be our best selves. We cannot allow our past to keep us in condemnation and guilt. We have to learn, grow and move on.

Love is Long-suffering

There are also times in each of our lives when we are all less loving than we should be and we say and do things that hurt others. Normally, we hurt others because we are in pain ourselves. Therefore, we must be willing to forgive others when they do or say something that hurts us. We must let it go and allow them to heal and change. It is unhealthy for us to hold them in the bondage of their past failures and mistakes. When we refuse to forgive others, God refuses to forgive us. Jesus said in Matthew 6:14-15, “If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if you forgive not others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

If we look at all people from the perspective that we are all living, learning and growing, it makes it a little easier to love everybody, even our enemies. Naturally, it is easy to love those who love you. Jesus said in Matthew 5:46-47, “For if ye love them which love you, what reward do you have? Even the sinners do that.” However, God calls us to love everyone, even our enemies. “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you (Matthew 5:43).”

Only God, who is love, can give us the grace to love those who hate us. It requires the empowerment of the Holy Spirit for us to bless them

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that curse us. We know that we are Christians when we are able to do good to them who do evil to us. It is our nature to want to retaliate and seek revenge. However, when we follow Christ’s example we will pray for those who despitefully use us, persecute us and speak all manner of evil against us. Even though, loving our enemies may sound far-fetched and idealistic, these are not just words on a page. God actually expects us to live this command to love our enemies.

**THEY ALL GET THE SAME TREATMENT!**

God’s love is universal. Whether people are in right relationship with him or not, “he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust (Matthew 5:45).” God’s love is not based on who a person is or what they do. He loves and provides for the needs of all of his children unconditionally. He gives everyone the same treatment, love.

The greatest demonstration of our love towards “everyone else” is how we treat them. As we follow God, we too must learn to give everyone the same treatment, the love treatment. The love treatment includes the Golden Rule, equality and meeting needs.

*Application of the Golden Rule*

I remember in Sunday School learning the Golden Rule, “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Many of us have heard this simple principle but how many of us really practice it? According to this principle, we are to treat people the way that we desire to be treated. This treatment is not based on how others treat us. It is solely based on our desired treatment.
How do we want to be treated? We all want the same treatment. We all want to be loved and respected for who we are. Many people are encouraging us to “teach tolerance.” However, do people just want to be tolerated? No. They want to be accepted. God has not called us to tolerate people. God has called us to love people. Love is unconditional acceptance.

Love and respect is not something people have to earn; it is something that we owe everyone. We owe it to people to love them. They deserve it as a result of their being made in the image and likeness of God. As followers of Christ, it is our duty. It is our obligation to show every one love. “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loves another hath fulfilled the law (Romans 13:8).”

Therefore, we are to treat everyone with love and respect. Jesus challenges us to exemplify the love and the respect that we seek. When people cross our path, they should experience love and respect because that is what we want from them and from anyone else whom we encounter.

Equality is a requirement, not an option!

Because God’s love for us is unconditional and universal, there is something inside of each of us that also desires people to give us equal treatment. When we are not treated equally, we feel sad, hurt and angry. Many wars and political battles have been fought for equality and civil rights. People want to be treated the same regardless of their differences. We all want the same rights and privileges. We all want to have access to
goods and services regardless of who we are. We do not want to be treated negatively because of our age, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, educational level, socio-economic status or physical/mental abilities.

James, the apostle, speaks out against discrimination in the church because of people’s socio-economic status (James 2:1-12). He rebuked the saints for giving the best seat in the house to a rich man and making the poor man sit on the floor. Our love cannot be partial. For, if we “show favoritism, we [have] sinned and are convicted by the law as law-breakers (James 2:9).”

God hates prejudice, discrimination and injustice. Like Peter, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation anyone who fears him … is accepted with him.” Therefore, God calls us to speak up and speak out against prejudice, discrimination and injustice whenever we see it or experience it. We cannot not just sit passively by and allow it to happen; we must answer the call of love.

*Love In Action*

In addition to incorporating the Golden Rule and principles of equality, it is also important for us to adopt the practice of helping anyone in need as a part of our general treatment of people. “But whosoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother have need, and shuts up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him (I John 3:17)?”

If we see someone in need physically, emotionally or spiritually, it is our responsibility to help them if we have the means to do so. Love is not just a theory or an idea. Love is an action that God calls us to live
out daily. The scriptures command us to be active in our love, “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth (I John 3:18).”

Love compels us to help our brothers and sisters who are in need. Remember, we are all brothers and sisters and anyone can be our neighbor. “Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed, but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it (James 2:15)?” It does not matter who the person is or what they have done, if God allows our paths to cross and we have the wherewithal to help them, we must provide for their needs. We must love everyone else. It’s Just That Simple!

SIMPLY PUT!

God is so diverse that He is able to create each person as a unique expression of Himself without duplication.

DEALING WITH DIFFERENCES

As human beings we all have our own idiosyncrasies, imperfections and prejudices. Nevertheless, God calls us to identify them and overcome them through the power of his love. Naturally, it is easier to love people who are similar to us. The real test of “loving everyone else” is dealing with people who are different from us. How do we love people who are different from us? How do we deal with the differences among people and still love them?

How Do I Love What I Don’t Like?

First, we must accept that God loves diversity. Although, we are more alike than we are different. We cannot ignore the fact that God has
made each of us unique. No two people have the same fingerprints. Even identical twins have different fingerprints. God is so diverse that He is able to create each person as a unique expression of Himself without duplication.

Because God has made each of us different, we must accept our differences instead of trying to make people into someone they are not. When we are unable to accept diversity, many of us use control, manipulation and domination to try to change people into an identity that we can feel comfortable with. However, when we really love people, we empower them to be themselves and to make their own decisions.

One of the greatest gifts that God has given us as human beings is choice. God presents us with options and allows us to choose. “I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore, choose life, that both you and your seed may live (Deuteronomy 30:19).” In this scripture, God gives the children of Israel options, shows them the consequences of their decisions and even makes a recommendation of the best choice; however, he never takes away their right to choose. He leaves the final decision up to them.

The Power and Pressure of Preference

We are not always going to agree with the choices or preferences that people make or their opinions on various subject matters. Nevertheless, even when we disagree with people, we can still manifest the love of Christ. One of the ways that we can show love while disagreeing is hearing people out. It is imperative that we let people express themselves. We must allow people to share their preferences and points of view with us without cutting them off because we dislike what is being said. Listening
to people is a common courtesy, a sign of respect and a demonstration of love. People want to feel heard. When people feel their voice is not heard, they scream out for attention in destructive behaviors, addictions and even violence.

Loving everyone does not mean that we agree with every thing that each one says and does. We can show people love and still disagree with them. We can disagree without being disagreeable. We can disagree with a person and have intense discussions about things that we are very passionate about without arguing, name-calling and fighting.

**Managing Your Opinions**

After we have shared our views and allowed the other person to share their views, if we see that an agreement is not going to be reached, we have two love options. One is to table the conversation for another time. The other is to simply agree to disagree. We can respectfully disagree with people without losing relationship with them. We can focus on the things that we do agree on; we can find the common ground. We can be mature enough not to discuss the subjects that we know we disagree on and not to do things that we know offend people.

We can also disagree with people about their lifestyles and behaviors without being condemning and judgmental. God calls us to love everyone, even people whose words and behaviors are in direct contradiction to the scriptures. No judgment. No condemnation. Just love. Jesus did not condemn sinners; he loved them. Through the power of his love, their lives were transformed because they desired it. “God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through him might be saved (John 3:17).” If people see and experience the love of
Christ through us, they will desire to be saved.

Many times we are so argumentative about what we believe because we make a value judgment that we are right and others are wrong. Is it possible for us to have different views and both of us are right? Is it possible for the same God to give different instructions to his children because they have different destinies? According to the scriptures, it is possible. In Romans 14, there are several examples where different believers did different things according to their own convictions and all of them were pleasing in the sight of God. The final conclusion for dealing with differences is, “we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ...Let us not therefore judge one another any more (Romans 14:10,13).”

**Loving the Seen and the Unseen**

None of us have ever seen God. We love God and believe in Him by faith. If we love God, then we must love His children, *all* of His children. “If a man says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen (I John 4:20)?” It is impossible for us to love the Father and hate His children who are created in His image and after His likeness.

We see and interact with all types of people every day and they all qualify for the “love everyone else” that Jesus calls us to do. Regardless of what they have done or how different they may be from us, they are all children of God either by creation or redemption. Because we are all a part of the family of God, each man is our brother and each woman is our sister. Simply put, everyone deserves our love and respect.
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Jesus Christ is the creator of the simple idea. It was His brainchild to summarize The Ten Commandments that Moses gave the children of Israel into one word, love. He is the author of the two explicit commandments, “Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37).” He is also the initiator of the implied third commandment, “Love Yourself.” Therefore, when we choosing to follow Christ, we are choosing to follow his example of love and making a commitment to live a lifestyle of love.

**THE MESSAGE**

“Love God. Love Yourself. Love Everyone Else. It’s Just That Simple!” is a simple message to conceptualize, remember and repeat. However, this simple concept can become very difficult to practice if we attempt to do it through our human nature alone. It is “not by might nor by power but by my Spirit says the Lord of hosts (Zechariah 4:6).” We need the Spirit of Christ to empower us to live this lifestyle of love.

Jesus Christ commands us to “take [His] yoke upon [us] and learn of [Him]… (Matthew 11:29).” Therefore, as His disciples in the earth to-
day, when we live this lifestyle of love we are actually taking on His yoke and bearing His burden. He never intended His yoke of love to be difficult or His burden of love to be heavy. In fact, he said, “my yoke is easy and my burden is light (Matthew 11:30).”

*Through Him it’s Simple!*

In a world where there is so much hatred, bitterness, envy, strife, violence and malice, love can only be light and easy when we allow Christ to love through us as opposed to us trying to do it ourselves. Actually, we must yield to the Spirit of Christ in us so that we can love God with all of our hearts. We must allow the Spirit of Christ in us to teach us, moment by moment, how to really love ourselves. We must let the Spirit of Christ in us empower us to love everyone else.

**His Love is the Standard**

*A Lifestyle of Love*

After Jesus’ death, burial, resurrection and ascension, the apostles followed the path of love that Jesus Christ established. They commanded all believers to “live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God (Ephesians 5:2).” They did not leave it up to us to figure out to what extent we should love everyone else. They were clear that we needed to love all people as Christ loved us.

Loving others as Christ loved us requires us to be willing to make sacrifices for the greater good of all people. God loved us enough to send His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for our sins. Jesus loved us enough to sacrifice His life so that we could have a loving relationship
with God. “Greater love has no man than this, then to lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13).”

*A Sacrifice of Love*

Just as Jesus Christ died for us, God calls us to lay our lives down for one another. Laying down our lives does not mean that we have to die on a cross or be a physical martyr. Laying down our lives means to make daily sacrifices for others. Laying down our lives means doing everything in our power to help all people, even when it is not convenient. Laying down our lives means to exercise restraint in various situations so that we do not say or do anything that we know would offend others.

Jesus Christ loved everybody. He even ate with the publicans and sinners (Matthew 9:9-12). He received a lot of persecution from the religious leaders of His day because He loved and interacted with all types of people. However, Jesus did not allow their prejudices to effect His love. He refused to discriminate against people because of their age, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, educational level, socio-economic status or physical/mental abilities.

Jesus loved the little children and allowed them to come to Him regardless of their age (Matthew 19:13-15). Jesus loved the woman with the issue of blood and allowed her to touch him regardless of her gender (Mark 5:24-26). Jesus loved the woman at the well regardless of Samaritan race and culture (John 4:1-24). Jesus loved Nicodemus regardless of his orthodox religious background (John 3:1-8). Jesus loved the woman caught in adultery regardless of her sexual orientation (John 8:1-11). Je-

Jesus loved everybody unconditionally. He accepted people regardless of where they were on their journeys and allowed His love to transform them into their best selves. The love of Christ is our measuring rod. His love is the standard that we must aspire to and reach for in our lives.

**THE LOVE BADGE**

Many of us are impressed by and seek the Gifts of the Spirit, which show God’s power (I Corinthians 12:1-12). Very few of us are in hot pursuit of the Fruit of the Spirit, which reveal God’s character and nature (Galatians 5:22-23). The real evidence, proof that will never be discredited, of our relationship with God is love. Unlike the Gifts of the Spirit, love cannot be mimicked. How we manifest love is a direct correlation of our intimacy with God. When we are in right relationship with God, love flows from us just as freely as our breath. When we are not in right relationship with God, it is a struggle for us to love.

Jesus gave his disciples a badge by which they could be identified to all people as his followers. He said in John 13:35, “by this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another.” Love is the badge of discipleship. The badge is not prophecies, because they will fail. The badge is not speaking in tongues, because it will cease. The
badge is not knowledge, because it will pass away. Only love will last forever (I Corinthians 13:8).

No Greater Gift Than Love

Love is the greatest gift of all (I Corinthians 13:1-4). Without love, speaking in tongues is just making noise. Without love, faith and prophecy mean nothing. No matter how much knowledge we have, without love we are nothing. Jesus Christ manifested God’s love to all people. Love is the only true virtue that identifies us with him; anything else is a fake id.

EASY AS 123

The “ABCs” of salvation (Accept, Believe, Confess) is what gets people saved. The “123s” (Love God, Love Yourself, Love Everyone Else) is what keeps people saved.

The more we love God, the easier it becomes to love Him and worship Him the way that He desires to be worshipped. The more we love ourselves, the easier it is to love ourselves regardless of our faults and failures. The more we love everyone else, the easier it becomes to love, accept and respect all people regardless of where they are or what they have done. The more we walk in love, the easier it becomes to live a lifestyle of love. It just gets easier and easier everyday. “It’s just that simple!”
IT’S JUST THAT SIMPLE!
EPILOGUE:
THE AFFIRMATION OF SIMPLICITY

We must take this simple concept and personalize it. Let this be our daily confession, affirming our love one to another flowing directly from our perfect love for God:

   It’s Just That Simple!”

LET US SHARE THIS MESSAGE WITH THE ENTIRE WORLD:

“LOVE GOD. LOVE YOURSELF. LOVE EVERYONE ELSE!
   IT’S JUST THAT SIMPLE!”
REFERENCES

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The Psychology of Science: A Reconnaissance.
I am grateful for the all my sons and daughters who are members of the Episcopal Team for your faithfulness and encouragement. I am eternally grateful to Gina Dorsey, for your excitement when you first read the concept in the Lenten Fast Journal, for the chant in the First Sunday Fellowship Service and “for making the numbers work.”

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To LaNita B. Brown, my grandmother, I love you so much. I am glad that God preserved your life to see this go forth. “If I were selling mud pies, you would be the first in line to buy one.” Everyone needs someone like you in their corner.

To my spiritual covering, Robert M. Taylor, Sr., your love, wisdom and understanding has motivated me to really do what God has called me to do in this “kairos time.” I am now manifesting faith at deeper level for “I Believe God!”
**Marketing & Promotional Correspondence**

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Share the *Simple!* message everyone you know. It’s Simple!

Call or visit our website today.

**PHONE**: 410/358.4575  ::  www.ItsJustThatSimple.org
Christianity is so easy to get into. Salvation is just as simple as the “ABC’s.” All you have to do is Accept, Believe and Confess. However, after salvation Christianity becomes complicated. There are so many rules, rituals and regulations. The salvation that was so simple becomes complex. As a result of these complications, many Christians who really love God become discouraged with the Church and often leave or become passive about their faith.

People need something simple that they can remember, live and share with others. This book makes the Christian lifestyle just as simple as one, two, three. Love God. Love Yourself. Love Everybody Else. It’s Just That Simple! This message of love provides all people with the opportunity to be whole and it empowers believers to live holistically healthy, balanced and well-rounded lives.

DORAL R. PULLEY celebrates over 30 years of ministry and is the Presiding Prelate of Church of the Everlasting Kingdom, a network of covenant local assemblies who embrace accountability, spirituality and excellence. He is a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor and the author of two other books: The Life Model for Spiritual Direction: A Guide to Establishing Mental Health Ministries and Redefining Relationships for the 21st Century. He is also known across the country for his preaching, teaching and training in Kingdom Principles, Church Protocol and Five-fold Ministry. He is the father of three children: Brittney, Courtney and Doral II. They reside in Baltimore, Maryland.

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