

IF YOU
L  **VE**
HIM...

The Sacrifices of
Devotion

Modupe Kumapayi

If You Love Him...

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When it comes to support, I've got God in my corner. He keeps showing me His love is the greatest, deepest and purest there is. His love expresses itself in so many forms; I have everything I need from it. I'm so grateful to Him.

I've also got my mother, Fadekemi, who has been an extension of God's love to me all my life. And there's my uncle 'Dele whose presence in my life from childhood has always been a blessing. Thank you to you both!

And I can't leave out my editor extraordinaire John Oseh of International Christian Book Network (ICBN), a special thanks to you, sir, for blessing me with your kindness and my books with your insight and skills.

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to Jesus Christ the
absolute love of my life who gave me His all.

WHAT'S THIS BOOK REALLY ABOUT?

ISN'T IT amazing how God knows and uses different means to get our attention? If you've seen Him do that time and time again in your life, then you would agree with me that sometimes He can use the most random things to accomplish this purpose; you'd also have the capacity to believe when I write that it was a fictional character that He used to draw my attention to the theme of this book. I still can't get over how amusing it is, to be honest.

I was in no way looking to write a new book when the idea for this book formed in my heart, and that is because I had a book at the editors already; and I was working daily to complete another one. But in the midst of everything, I had decided to take up leisure reading during my breaks. It was right there God found me and reminded me of a duty I have to Him while I remained in a relationship with Him and my heart tethered to His, a duty every Christian has to Him actually. Immediately, I wrote down the idea even though I knew it would take a while before I'd get to writing the book itself.

Thankfully my schedule cleared up and I could finally get to writing this book; but even before then I couldn't stop thinking about the theme of this book which is love; it's privileges and the responsibilities attached to it, including that

fictional character. Let me tell you what was so captivating about her; Although her love was the emotional kind, between a man and a woman, and the one which we will explore in this book is centred on God's kind, which is Agape, in other words, selfless; still, this fictional character was able to captivate and inspire me because she understood that love, though has its privileges, benefits which she clearly was enjoying and continued to enjoy; it also has responsibilities attached, sacrifices that she would be required to make and which she was more than prepared to make. Her love was not mere words; it was backed up with actions, consistent actions.

She knew how to receive love and she knew how to love in return. I can't even boast that I am like her in that manner. You see, I know all about God's love for me even though I'm sure I'd never be able to fully comprehend it; and I also know how to enjoy the privileges and benefits that come with it. However, I can't say I know how to love Him in return, at least in the way that He asks. I'm a work in progress; and my case describes that of many Christians out there! There are even those who claim not to know that God expects anything from us. To them, I'd say, even between a man and a woman, how long does a parasitic (one-sided) relationship last before it folds? Not long! Though God's love comes without conditions (this in itself is a privilege), He still has expectations of us who are recipients of His love and claim to be devoted to Him.

Questions like how can I show God I love Him in return, what are the things I must do, His expectations of me? These questions and more are what we will be exploring and attempting to answer in this book, with the Holy Scriptures, specifically the words of Jesus as our guide. This book, like

most of my books, is not designed to be a lengthy book, not for a lack of things to write but to give room for each reader to read it over and over again until the words in these pages begin to take root in our hearts and bear fruits in our lives; then eventually God, including everyone around us can testify about our Christianity – about our love.

My goal with this book is to reintroduce God's love to you; remind you of what God's love looks like and rebuild in your heart brick by brick what your love to God should look like too. It's my prayer that when you're done reading this book, no matter how many times you read it, that the Holy Spirit does such good work in you that the measure of your love for God will be visible for all to see, in Jesus' name, Amen!

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“THREE THINGS WILL LAST
FOREVER – FAITH, HOPE, AND
LOVE – AND THE GREATEST OF
THESE IS LOVE.”

1 CORINTHIANS 13:13, NLT

PART 1

WHAT'S HIS L♥VE LIKE?

JUST LIKE our faces differ and our personalities too, you and I alongside Christians all over the world who have learnt to recognize and accept God's love, if asked what God's love is like, by this I mean going by our experiences with God's love, we will all have different words to define it, different stories to tell; yet there will be certain qualities about His love that will appear in each of our stories that will eventually reveal to us bits of a whole of what God's love is truly like. So what's God's love like? Let's explore some true life events culled from Scriptures that shed light on God's love.

LOVE ENCOUNTER #1 THE SAMARITAN WOMAN – PATIENCE



THE SAMARITAN woman would testify that **God's love depicts Patience**. Her encounter with Jesus is recorded in John 4:5-42. And, though John who shares with us this encounter explains it away as a chance meeting, but knowing Jesus' ways, especially how intentional He is, it's hard to accept that explanation. In fact, I propose that the best way to explain the meeting is to call it a planned intervention. And proof to back up my point is in the conversation they had. Although the woman was meeting Jesus for the first time that day, truth is, Jesus couldn't just have met her that day, for He knew her intimately even though concerning her private life all He revealed from what He knew was her misadventures in love. She credits His prophetic gift for that bit of information; but we know it goes beyond that, for God not only created us, and knows everything about us, but He also lovingly keeps track of everything that concerns us.

Many words describe the Samaritan woman well, such as, inquisitive, polite, chatty, humble, truthful etc. Yet there is only one way to describe her need, it is thirst. She was thirsty for love, even if she wouldn't admit it, her actions proved it. God had created her with the desire for love but she had looked for it in all the wrong places, until that day. In the moment she couldn't have known, but looking at the encounter in

hindsight, she must have seen that Jesus was showing her that she didn't have to go out searching for love like she was accustomed to; she could be in her hometown, having an ordinary day, going about her chores, and then discover that love in its purest form had been patiently waiting for her all along.

It was no coincidence that the setting of the encounter was by a well. Jesus was in need of water to drink to refresh Himself, true; but He was also there to reveal to her a way to quench her thirst. The setting, including the initial back and forth of their conversation, reveals Jesus' intention. But it also reveals she was slow to comprehend. Yet He proves He has the capacity to accept and tolerate the delay in comprehension without getting angry or upset; after all, He's been waiting patiently all her life for this very moment, that very encounter. And so the conversation continued. Yet, not until verse 16 does Jesus outrightly expose the issue He's been circling around, and even though they don't dwell too long on it as she quickly changes the topic, still Jesus indulges her by actively participating in all the other topics she's decided to raise.

The encounter seems to have ended the minute Jesus revealed His true identity to her because His disciples return. But it's important to note that the woman's very next action buys her more time with Jesus. Scriptures reveal that she left her water jar beside the well and ran back to the village. She told everyone about just one thing out of the many things she and Jesus talked about. In her words, she said *"Come and see a*

man who told me everything I ever did! (I guess Jesus did hit a nerve back then). Then she adds, “*could he possibly be the Messiah?*” (NLT).

Anyway, what I mean when I say her action bought her more time with Jesus is that, by the reason of her informing the villagers, an invitation was extended to Jesus who was more than willing to stay and share His message until they believed. I imagine her in the crowd listening to Him and not missing a thing. I also imagine Jesus not missing His chance to share perhaps a story that will address her need and her mistakes, and then offering practical advice to her. I imagine her ruminating over it, and eventually figuring it out. I also imagine her at the end of Day 2 seeing Jesus and His love even more clearly than ever. I imagine her along with the others that make up the crowd believing in Jesus and His message with all of their hearts.

I reckon that it's in hindsight that she sees God's love as patience, not only because He waited for her to recognize it, but also to accept it as what she had needed and the only kind that could truly satisfy.

LOVE ENCOUNTER #2

THE WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY – KINDNESS



THE WOMAN caught in the act of adultery would testify that **God's love is Kind**. Her encounter with Jesus is recorded in John 8:1-11. And John tells us that she was in a very embarrassing, life and death situation when it happened.

Though purity is a virtue expected of Christians, but then even non-believers know that the very act of being intimate with a married person is generally frowned upon; yet this woman whose encounter we're exploring found herself involved with a married man. And on one of the days she was with him she was caught in the very act, and not by just anyone, but by the religious leaders. They conveniently left the married man who was her partner in crime and dragged her away to be punished as they deemed fit.

No one but God knows what was going through her mind as they dragged her away from her lover's arms. She knew she was in trouble and at their mercy; it's doubtful if she hoped they would be lenient in any way. Did she promise God that if He helped her this one time she would never do it again? Like I wrote earlier, only God knows. Whether she thought and prayed in that manner, we don't know but what we do know is that God knew what she needed, and that's exactly who and what He provided.

The religious leaders may have dragged her to Jesus for various reasons. Little did they know they had taken her where she had to be in order for her to meet who she had to meet and receive what she needed the most for her life to take on a dramatic turn for the better. In front of the crowd, which also is in front of Jesus, they revealed her sin, and I can almost hear the crowd gasp. I can see her filled with shame and indicating it by refusing to raise her head nor look anyone in the eye. How could she! She truly was guilty. And when they stated what punishment was due her and waiting for this new teacher to affirm them, she must have thought all hope for a new life, a different kind of life was lost, for why will this new teacher think or act any different from these “old” religious leaders? Weren’t they all the same?

But as she kept her head bowed and eyes filled with tears of regret, while waiting for the new teacher to add His voice to that of the others, she suddenly saw a figure crouched and writing in the dust with His finger. She blinked away the tears and saw it was the new teacher. What was He writing? She couldn’t see it. She could hear the rest demanding He provide an answer to their initial question about her punishment. When finally He stands up, and speaks, with bated breath she waited to hear Him condemn her to death as the others have done. Alas! When He speaks, His words showed her kindness. He was working to spare her life! Here’s what He said to her accusers, *“All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!”* (NLT).

Again I can hear a gasp from everyone on the scene! The woman herself must have been stunned by His reply. She must have thought this new teacher was surely different! But nothing prepared her for what came next! With her head still bowed, she could see the feet of her accusers move away one by one, beginning with the oldest! Soon the only feet close to hers were those of the new teacher. He was still crouched, still writing in the dust.

On her part, she maintained her subdued posture, wondering what would come next. She suddenly sees this new teacher move closer so He could speak to her. When He asks her about her accusers, she had to raise her head to look around so she could provide an answer. And as quickly as she had answered, He spoke words to her that revealed a lot to her.

The teacher had called her involvement with a married man a sin; so He wasn't excusing her action in any way. Yet He had refused to side with the others to condemn her to death; not because she wasn't guilty and deserving of punishment, but beyond all of that was His desire for her to live and do things differently. In other words, He gave her another chance.

Perhaps that same day as she walked away from Jesus and was on her way back home, she could have compared all the love she had experienced, and decided that the kindest of them all was the one Jesus showed her, the type that stuck with her in an embarrassing situation, the type that fought to give her life back to her, and offered her a second chance at doing things differently. And if any of her friends asked her about love, we already know who she'd be talking about.

LOVE ENCOUNTER #3

TESTIMONY OF HIS DISCIPLES – NO JEALOUSY



THE DISCIPLES of Jesus would testify that **God's love is void of jealousy**. Before I begin, I know some people are already thinking, isn't our God a jealous God? Well, yes. You're right to affirm the seven times in the King James Version of the Bible where He is variously described as a jealous God. And He is jealous because He created us and deserving of our unalloyed love and devotion. So, if anyone chooses other gods over Him, and offer them devotion, yes, God would be jealous. One thing however God isn't jealous about is when we become better versions of ourselves, neither is He threatened by it. In fact, what His love does is help us become the best versions of ourselves that we can be. And He proves this by what He does in the lives of the disciples if you look closely.

In Matthew 10:2-4, we get a list of Jesus' disciples/apostles; they were initially just ordinary folk. Yes, a few had skills, but none of them would be considered wise or great. Perhaps one, Matthew, had a measure of wealth, but that was all there was to them. At least that's how it seemed. However, during their three and a half years with Jesus physically, and the consistent relationship they had with Him in spirit, a lot changed about them (at least eleven of them)!

They were completely transformed, all thanks to Jesus who spent time teaching them new ways to think and live, blessing them with the gift of insight (so they could understand all He

taught them). He helped them unlearn the ways of the world, blessing them with rich spiritual gifts and allowing them share His authority, yet giving them front-row seats to the display of His power; not forgetting to model to them what true leadership should be. Oh! How could I forget that He gave them assignments that presented to them not only the opportunity to serve, but a chance at relevance in the grand scheme of things!

Jesus didn't look upon any of them as rivals and hope to be more advantageous if they remained how He met them. He loved them too much to leave them how He met them, neither did He feel insecure when He looked upon them being their best selves. Rather, what He saw of them must have filled Him with joy!

LOVE ENCOUNTER #4 RECIPIENTS AND SPECTATORS OF JESUS' HEALING – NO BOASTFULNESS



THE VARIOUS recipients and spectators of Jesus' healing will testify that **God's love is without boastfulness**. And I think a good example is the events recorded in Mark 7:31-37.

During Jesus' public ministry, He could often be seen expressing His love for the people by healing the sick with His miraculous power. Many who were sick approached Him themselves; and there were others who took their loved ones to

Him for healing. Whatever the case was, no one who went to Him for healing was turned away. The man whose encounter we are about to explore falls into the second category.

Though he wasn't blind, and one would easily wonder why he would need assistance to go meet Jesus, but it makes sense when we learn that he is deaf and has speech impediment. He probably lacked the courage to face Jesus, and had wondered endlessly how he would be able to communicate with Him effectively. Sometimes the situations we find ourselves have a way of eroding our confidence.

When finally before Jesus the man stands, and the people beg Him to instantly lay His hands on the man to heal him, Jesus instead leads the man away from the crowd so they could be alone. Then in the most unusual way He heals the man. The specific text says, "*Instantly the man could hear perfectly, and his tongue was freed so he could speak plainly!*" (NLT).

I have often wondered why Jesus led the man away from the crowd before healing him. Finally as I write this I believe I know why. You see, the crowd while pleading with Jesus to heal the man had also suggested the way He should do it – by laying hands on him. However, God can't be put in a box. Jesus had in mind to heal the man in a different way, a way that might be so unusual it might even be considered disgusting. Perhaps if the crowd had a front-row seat to that healing, they might talk the man out of standing there and being "assaulted" by Jesus' finger and spittle.

Thankfully the crowd don't have front-row seats but they know something is going on with Jesus and the man because

they couldn't have moved too far away; they also eventually see the man return to them able to hear and speaking plainly. Jesus returns with him too and then instructs them not to tell anyone about the miracle they had just witnessed!

I wish I could have been there to see how the disciples, the man who had just been healed and the crowd were left in awe by that instruction of His. I say this because, who do you know that will do such a big thing for another, especially one who couldn't repay them and then not go on and on about it to others and – wait for it – even ask others, including the person they did this big thing for, not to go on and on talking about Him or what He's done with anyone. Now if you're familiar with the story, you know the crowd (I dare say including the man who had been healed) didn't pay attention to Jesus' instruction; instead, they spread the news! They talked about the things He did.

We already know what the crowd, the man who had been healed (and also the disciples) thought of what Jesus had just done – that it was wonderful. But if we asked those witnesses what the character and demeanour of Jesus were, and what His love looked like in that moment; what do you think they'd say, especially after hearing the instruction He gave after the healing? You'd agree with me that they'd have said Jesus wasn't boastful. With love He attended to the needs of the man and He didn't sing His praises nor parade Himself afterwards. It was clear what His motive was for His display of power. He simply wanted to help someone in need, that's all!

LOVE ENCOUNTER #5

PETER'S PRIVATE LESSON – WITHOUT PRIDE



IF ASKED about **God's love**, Peter, one of Jesus' frontline disciples, would surely testify it **is without pride** – the Lord was **never proud**. And one occasion recorded in Matthew 17:24-27 would have served to inform that testimony.

Though it's Matthew that recounts it, it's actually Peter that has the encounter. For it was he that upon their (i.e Jesus and His disciples') arrival in Capernaum, collectors of the Temple tax go to meet. They wanted to know if Jesus paid the Temple tax. Peter revealed to them that He in fact did. And when Peter returns to the house, he and Jesus have a conversation about it.

From their conversation which Jesus Himself initiated, He makes it clear to Peter that although He was greater than kings and their people who are often exempt from tax payment, He was paying the tax because He was choosing to humble Himself, downplaying His importance. Also because – wait for it – this was for the good of others.

Had He chose instead to do the opposite and insist that He was above paying taxes, even though He would be in the right, it would offend others, since they hadn't discerned and accepted His true identity, it would stir up negative emotions in them; they'd be upset, annoyed or resentful, and He didn't want that. After saying this, He goes on to give Peter

instructions on how to get payment for the tax they were both required to pay.

Now as Peter walked down to the lake as ordered by the Lord, to catch a fish in whose mouth a large silver coin would be, he had to have pondered over what Jesus had just not only said but was actively doing. He loved the people who, to be fair, didn't care for Him so much. That He was willing to be regarded like every random person and submit to authority by doing as was required of Him in order to protect their feelings speaks volumes about the Lord's humility.

Now this is huge. I imagine Peter saying to himself of Jesus, "what manner of man is this?" And, of course wondering to himself if he could ever love others that much that he would willingly downplay his importance and put their needs above his right to be treated differently because of his position and authority.

Do you think Peter ever got to expressing love like Jesus' to others? I believe that as he matured in the faith, he did. And if anyone were to ask him who his example was, I know he'd mention Jesus; and if they told him to list instances of this, this particular tax payment incident would surely have been top of his list of instances.

Someone may wonder why it was just Peter that had this encounter. Well, I'm of the opinion that Peter had this privilege because he was being prepared for a very important leadership role in the church after Jesus' ascension. Jesus modelled to him what a leader's love can look like and should look like. And,

hey! Even though it was a private lesson for Peter, he doesn't keep it to himself; he shares it with the other disciples. That's how Matthew got to know. And now you and I know about it too.

LOVE ENCOUNTER #6 A RELIGIOUS LEADER'S ENCOUNTER – NO RUDENESS



NICODEMUS, A Jewish religious leader who was a Pharisee, would testify that **God's love is not rude**. His encounter with Jesus is recorded in John 3:1-21. And according to John's narration, this privileged encounter takes place after dark one evening.

Now, if you're not familiar with the words "Jewish religious leader and Pharisee", you can take it to mean someone who is very knowledgeable about the Jewish traditional and written laws; and not only knowledgeable but also distinguished by his strict observance of it. For such a person to visit Jesus, while it's not unlikely because those who belonged to the same Jewish sect as Nicodemus were often seen approaching Jesus (though with malicious intent), they often did so in the day time and with a crowd of witnesses.

Nicodemus' visit raises eyebrows because it's done after dark, and with no crowds as witnesses. And this is because for

one, he was different from the others in that he sought out Jesus with a different motive. He wasn't out to trap Him; he was out to interview Him, or better put, to consult Him on some matters he needed clarification on. Nicodemus had a genuine need to know. And when he meets with Jesus, even before he begins to ask his questions, Jesus begins to provide him with answers.

The first thing to note is that Jesus grants Nicodemus audience. He doesn't hear of his arrival and say, "Oh, another one from the opposition. Tell him I'm unavailable" to turn him away. And, if you read the conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus carefully, you'd see that nowhere is it recorded that Jesus was impolite to him or shame him for coming to him, especially after dark.

Jesus of course understood the confidentiality Nicodemus wanted in seeking Him out in the dark of the night; and after He had sat to speak to him, He does not rile at the ignorance of the religious man when Nicodemus struggled with understanding what Jesus was saying to him. Yes, Jesus teases him about his position in the Jewish sect, but He still goes ahead to give him information that would eventually help him understand His words better and accept them. Both had a full conversation where Jesus challenges Nicodemus without provoking him in any way that he felt he had to leave.

Did Jesus get through to him? You tell me, because though the encounter ends without us knowing what Nicodemus had resolved to do, by the time we hear of Nicodemus in John

7:50-51, we see him openly speaking in favor of Jesus; and by John 19:39, his action proved he was affiliated with Jesus.

But wait, I hope you don't think that it was just Jesus' words that got Nicodemus this far, that it had nothing to do with the way Jesus expressed His love to him that night when he sought Him out? Even if you think that way, I'm certain Nicodemus could not!

LOVE ENCOUNTER #7 TWO DISCIPLES ARE ADMONISHED – NO SELF- WILL



JAMES AND John would testify that **God's love does not demand its own way.** And one of several events that will inspire their testimony is found in Luke 9:51-56. This encounter as recounted by Luke started off with Jesus setting out to go to Jerusalem but wanting to drop by, to visit a Samaritan village first. Like all His visits, it wouldn't have been a casual visit; it must have been purposeful. He sends messengers (possibly a few of His disciples) ahead of Himself to the Samaritan village to prepare for His arrival, but the people weren't welcoming of neither the messengers nor of Jesus. And this, not because they had an issue with the messengers and Jesus, but because they learnt Jesus was going to Jerusalem.

Now it's important that we know that there was a long standing divide between the Jews and the Samaritans, and it seems the mention of Jerusalem was a trigger, causing old issues and old feelings to resurface. Anyway, Jesus was rejected; and if He had it in mind to share His message with them and heal those who were sick amongst them, their action and inaction would have brought an abrupt end to all those good plans.

James and John were present and aware of everything that had happened; but how did they respond to this? They wanted to retaliate, and immediately too. They reasoned if they were feeling the heat of rejection, the people of that Samaritan village ought also to feel the heat of fire from heaven burning them up! It would be tit for tat! And if any of the villagers survived the inferno, then they wouldn't dare reject them anymore. Thank God they shared their thoughts with Jesus who turned and rebuked them. And wait for it, Jesus simply redirected His entourage and went on to another village!

Jesus rebuking His vengeful disciples means He expressed His disapproval of how they thought and what they wanted to do. He had wanted to preach and heal in that village because He loved them and His love for them didn't simply fade away when they rejected Him. Even in rejection He loved them and was willing to prove it by taking their rejection in stride and respecting their decision, waiting till a later time when they would be ready to accept Him. He wasn't going to insist or demand to have His way with those Samaritans, even though

He could; that just wasn't His style, and neither should it be the style of those who were of the same Spirit as He.

James and John thinking back on that moment later on, would definitely have learnt a great lesson on how love expresses itself, and would have continued to work towards their own love looking like Jesus'.

LOVE ENCOUNTER #8 THE PARENT'S DELIGHT – GOOD DISPOSITION



SOME PARENTS whose encounter we would soon explore would testify that **God's love is not irritable but of a good disposition.** Their encounter is recorded in three out of the four gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke. However, let's go with the one recorded in Luke 18:15-17.

Luke tells us that one day some parents brought their little children to Jesus so He could touch and bless them. I'm assuming little would mean infants and toddlers, and from being around children a lot I can tell you that their presence means there would be some crying going on, parents shushing children, and there would be some crawling/running around, with parents running after their children trying to get them in order. I can picture the scene and it would have been a lot.

All of that meaning a lot of distraction for Jesus who, let's be honest, would have been busy. He was either busy teaching

or busy healing or even busy resting. And so, when His disciples saw the children and their parents, with the associated chaos going on where they were, and when these parents tell them they want to see Jesus with their children, the disciples did what any average person would do: tell the parents they would be a bother to Jesus! In fact as Luke puts it, the disciples didn't just talk to the parents, they scolded them; meaning they gave them an earful – because they believed their presence, not to talk of their seeing Jesus, was already a bother!

But Jesus probably within range could see and hear what was going on between His disciples and these parents, and does something unexpected. He took a break from whatever it was He was doing – something I believe was important – and called for the children. It doesn't end there, He even goes as far as instructing the disciples not to stop children from coming to Him going forward, and then uses the children as the star of the next lesson He would teach the disciples.

I can imagine the various emotions the parents felt that day: from excitement to disappointment, and then excitement again, because of something Jesus did for their children and said about their children. They would have left contented; and if any other parents had asked them about their encounter with Jesus, they would have said to them, “Oh, He loves children.... You should have seen how He made out time from His busy schedule to attend to them. He wasn't upset at all at the disruption in His schedule. And when He held them and blessed them, He took His sweet time with each of them, called

them by name, and made them laugh.... Not one child fussed any more. You really should take your child(ren) to see Him.”

Can you see it happening this way? I totally can. The parents would have been absolutely delighted with Jesus and grateful for His love towards their children, so much so that they wouldn't have been able to stop gushing about it to anyone who cared to listen.

LOVE ENCOUNTER #9 A NOTORIOUS SINNER'S ENCOUNTER – ABSOLUTE FORGIVENESS



ZACCHAEUS THE notorious sinner would testify that **God's love keeps no record of being wronged**, and His encounter recorded by Luke you'll find in Luke 19:1-10.

Although Zacchaeus was a very rich man, he wasn't loved by the people, his people. Even though he occupied a prominent position in the society, amongst the people he was a social outcast. And this hatred and rejection, he brought upon himself by the choices he made and continued to make.

You see, Zacchaeus was a tax collector, a chief tax collector. This means he typically overcharged or swindled his people (the Jews) when it was time for them to pay their (Roman) taxes. And Zacchaeus, I believe, had gotten used to this hatred and rejection from his people even though I wonder how one can really get used to such a thing, especially because we are all

created with the desire to be loved. I believe that although Zacchaeus was greedy, he also desired to be loved, to be accepted and included, not sure though he'd readily admit that.

One day he got his secret desire met. That day Jesus entered Jericho where Zacchaeus either lived or worked or both. The news spread that Jesus was in town and Zacchaeus having heard of Him wanted to get a look at Him. But so did the crowd. Unfortunately for Zacchaeus he was too short to see over the crowd; so he climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road. He had learnt that Jesus was going to pass that way. Jesus did pass that way and that's when the unexpected happens.

Zaccheaus who would have been content with just catching a glimpse of Jesus' face now had the privilege of being the subject of His attention. And, wait for it, not negative attention as had long been Zacchaeus' experiences with his fellow Jews, but positive attention. Yes, positive attention from a fellow Jew, a prophet for that matter! This man whom he had heard of but had never met before in his life called him by name, a man who probably (being a prophet and all) knew all the wrongs he had committed against his people, and who should be taking sides with them and cursing him, was inviting Himself into his home! Nothing more incredulous had ever happened to him!

As instructed Zacchaeus climbs down from the tree, walks in the company of Jesus and took Him into his house amidst the displeasure and grumbling of the people. Zacchaeus is so moved by Jesus' positive attention, that as soon as they get into his house and before Jesus even opens His mouth to say

anything to him, Zacchaeus' life takes a dramatic turn for the better. He announces that He would share his wealth with the poor, that he would return the illegal profits he'd made at work, and then some.

How does Jesus respond? Of course He's elated; He commends Zacchaeus and reveals why He did what He did with Zacchaeus. It was all for the sole purpose of saving his lost soul.

I believe Zacchaeus's encounter was not only impacting but also one that would not leave his mind any time soon. I doubt he'd forget how Jesus made him feel, how He had with one encounter done for him what all the wealth he had amassed had failed to do. Jesus made him feel loved, by finding him just as he was, a sinner and all, yet showering him with positive attention, and including him in His day even though everyone else was displeased and had grumbled. Now that's not something you forget in a hurry or can keep to yourself!

LOVE ENCOUNTER #10 THE MAN WITH A DEFORMED HAND – TRUTH WINS



THE MAN with a deformed hand would testify that **God's love does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins.** His encounter appears in three of the four gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke; but let's explore the one recorded in Mark 3:1-6.

It all happened on a Sabbath. This means it was a day of religious observance and abstinence from work. Being a Jew, this man with the deformed hand was in the synagogue, present not for the scandal of grace that was about to happen, but for religious worship and instructions. There he was at the right place, at the right time; and I dare add, on the right day when Jesus notices him. Is he surprised that Jesus noticed him? Does he also notice the religious leaders taking notice of Jesus noticing him? I'm not sure.

Well, soon enough he does discover Jesus had noticed him and was asking him to stand in front of everyone. But not just that, as soon as he answers Jesus' call, Jesus starts to speak; then he discovers it was no ordinary call. Something was about to happen. Jesus, this new prophet/teacher, was starting a debate about the Sabbath with the religious leaders. Wait, but why? he must have wondered.

Jesus was asking them, *"Does the law permit good deeds on the Sabbath, or is it a day for doing evil? Is this a day to save life or to destroy it?" But they wouldn't answer him*" (NLT). I can imagine the man looking from Jesus to the religious leaders and the rest of the people in the synagogue, wanting to be anywhere else but the middle of a religious debate, especially since he couldn't have known what exactly was going on, or how it concerned him or how it would be for his good.

And then suddenly Jesus breaks the silence. But first, the man can see Him looking around with righteous indignation and sadness. But why? The man is yet to understand, but soon

everything becomes clear when he hears Jesus command him to hold out his hand. He could argue with Him and remind Him his hand was deformed, but there was something in His tone that begged him to obey. So he makes an attempt at holding out his deformed hand, and right there before his very eyes, he sees his hand become fully restored. And with one look at the Pharisees' angry faces, each getting up slowly first to leave, then all at once, the man knew Jesus had been fighting for him.

This man named Jesus whom people called a prophet and a teacher and whom he (probably) had never met before had fought for him! The religious debate which seemed to be about the Sabbath was also in some way about him, for Jesus was speaking out against the injustice of denying him his healing in that moment, on that day! Left to the religious leaders, he could go without the spiritual help he needed one more day; but not Jesus. He didn't want him to go one more day without that healing. So, even though it meant risking His life for him, Jesus does it.

The religious leaders couldn't rejoice with him; but there was Jesus, the man who had stood up for him and spoken for him, standing beside him and rejoicing with him as he rejoiced over his healing. You already know what he'd have told his family and friends and all who asked him about his healing. Of course he would freely speak of God's love, and say it's the kind that fought against injustice.

LOVE ENCOUNTER #II

THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST – NEVER GIVES UP



THE APPEARANCE of Jesus in this world, His public ministry, but most specially the events that happened towards the end of His public ministry, testify that **God's love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful and endures through every circumstance.**

Jesus Himself speaking in Mark 10:45 says, “*For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many*” (NLT). All the encounters of others whom we’ve explored reveal to us some of the ways Jesus served others. But there’s one way which is the ultimate service He rendered to humanity. And that is giving His life as a ransom for many.

Now let’s make no mistake in understanding His words, He does give His life for all humanity, but He says “for many” because not everyone will accept His sacrifice and the benefits; yet He still goes ahead to give His life anyway.

Jesus had used the word “ransom”. Let’s look into what that means. A ransom is the sum of money or other payments demanded or paid for the release of a prisoner. So what Jesus’ words imply is that by giving His life, He is fulfilling a requirement for the release of all who believe and receive Him.

Someone may say, but how are we prisoners? Well, the word is used to describe our spiritual state. From the beginning the first humans beguiled by the enemy had chosen to not obey God, and because of their actions sin and death entered the world. Now we too sin, choosing not to obey God. And just like them of old, we too are deserving of punishment. We not only lose out on a chance to fellowship with God while we are still alive, but when we die we are also separated from Him in eternity. So yes, we are prisoners trapped by a situation, a set of circumstances, and being punished in this world while also waiting trial and punishment when our lives here are over.

But God loves us too much to just give up on humanity. Even after the first humans sinned and others continued to sin, He never lost faith in us, and in our returning to Him. So when the time was right He put in motion a plan to rescue us permanently from our spiritual “imprisonment” and the pain we kept inflicting on ourselves. This means the judgments/consequences that accompany our action and inaction. And the living embodiment of that plan is Jesus.

This is how John quotes Jesus’ explanation on His mission in John 3:16-18a. *“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him”* (NLT).

God gave Jesus to us as a proof of His love. The betrayal Jesus faced, the arrest, the desertion of His disciples, the unfair

trial, false witnesses, the beatings, the crowd's rejection, the stripping, mockery and beatings by the soldiers, the crucifixion and His death, not forgetting His resurrection were all God's way of proving to us He loves us still and was hopeful that we would acknowledge and accept His salvation plan, and thereby be set free from our old sinful nature and its consequences, and be reconciled with Him, receive His Spirit so we can live a new life on earth that's pleasing to Him. And when our life on earth is over, we can also remain with Him in eternity forever.

God put the plan in motion. Jesus made the plan a reality. And all we have to do is simply believe. Yet some of us won't; and how does God react to that? He suffers our rejection patiently, hoping that before our time on earth is up and we enter into eternal damnation, we would make the right decision.

Someone might ask, so does this mean those who are now saved will never sin? The truth is, we live in a fallen world and that means there would always be temptation to sin; and because even though our spirit is renewed, our bodies aren't. We will find ourselves from time to time struggling with our old tendencies. Eh! The struggle is good. It means our spirit is not in agreement with the flesh. And yes, most times the spirit wins; but if the flesh ever wins, all we have to do is go to God, repent genuinely and ask for His forgiveness. The comforting news is, He will not only forgive us but also give us the grace to not continually give in to the flesh.

LOVE ENCOUNTER #12

A FORMER SINNER'S DECLARATION – LASTS FOREVER



I DON'T know if you already guessed correctly who I'm referring to, but I'd save you the suspense: it's Paul also known as Saul of Tarsus! The summary of his declaration which we will soon read is that **God's love lasts forever!**

The declaration is captured in Romans 8:35-39. It seems a long read, but it's totally worth it. *“Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, “For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.”) No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.*

“And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love.No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (NLT).

You see, although Paul's story in the Bible starts with him standing by watching over the coats of those who stoned and executed Stephen, he was soon to become, not only a believer

in Jesus Christ, but one exceptionally gifted. His story had started long before then, and no, I'm not talking about his childhood, but before, while in his mother's womb, when God had already begun to love him. Yes, that love continued even past that time which the Bible speaks of in Acts 7, goes further down past the times when Paul would begin to persecute the Christians.

This special knowledge of God's love only became evident to him when he had an encounter with the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus. But like many of us, Paul's life even after accepting Christ wasn't a bed of roses. It's true that he went on three missionary journeys, wrote thirteen New Testament books, took Christianity to the Gentiles and trained some of the early church leaders; but it's also true that he faced a lot of troubles.

He was beaten up, stoned, shipwrecked, faced dangers from rivers and robbers, from both Jews and Gentiles, in the cities, deserts and on the seas, even from some who claimed to be believers. He had to endure many sleepless nights, went hungry and thirsty, fasted often, lacked sufficient clothing etc (See 2 Corinthians 11:24-28). Did I mention that he was often arrested and thrown into jail?

Well, Paul went through all of that and more; it was as though the enemy was trying to prove to Paul that these things happened to him because God had stopped loving him. But Paul by God's Spirit knew better than that. He knew that God never stopped loving. I believe it's from a place of experience

and conviction that Paul makes the declaration that is captured in the opening verses we read.

So, for those wondering why a loving God would allow Paul and Christians all over the world to go through such challenging situations, here's what Jesus has to say about it in John 15:18-21;

“If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you. Do you remember what I told you? ‘A slave is not greater than the master.’ Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to me, they would listen to you. They will do all this to you because of me, for they have rejected the one who sent me” (NLT).

God's love didn't end because Paul started to experience difficult times. Like many Christians all over the world, Paul experienced hardship perhaps even more than the average human, simply because we live in a fallen world that is opposed to God and all things that pertain to Him. This Jesus makes clear when He says to the disciples, *“If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first...”* Jesus also makes it clear that if they weren't affiliated with God they had a higher chance at living a life with less hardship. Isn't that an eye-opener!

Yes, you're wondering where's God's love in all of the hardships? Paul speaking from his experiences say, God's love is the reason why he though pressed on every side by troubles, is not crushed; why he was perplexed but not driven to despair; why though hunted down, he never felt abandoned by God; why when he got knocked down he didn't get destroyed etc. (2 Corinthians 4:8-10).

Paul could feel God's love right there with him, saving him, working in him through what he went through and also working it out for the good of others as well. This includes you and me who are learning from his experiences. If Paul had died as he went through those hard times, you can be sure that God's love would see to it that he received his eternal reward. For God's love for His children doesn't stop even when our lives on earth are over.

SUMMARY

SO WHAT'S God's love like? By now (from the testimonies we've explored) you know that God's love is patient and kind; it's not jealous or boastful, proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. It never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. And of course, it's a kind of love that will last forever!

I imagine someone thinking to themselves, isn't this something Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13? Yes it is. In 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, Apostle Paul does try to explain what love is to us. In the actual sense, he is describing God's love and the qualities of it. Although in the testimonies we explored, we see how each quality of God's love takes centre stage, it doesn't mean one person doesn't get to experience all of these qualities of God's love and more in their lifetime. I can testify to this.

I have seen that God's love is not only patient with me but also kind, alongside the rest of the qualities it possesses; and if you take a closer look in your own life, you'd see that it's the same with you. You've enjoyed God's love with all its qualities, and you're still enjoying it and will continue to do so forever. This is something to be grateful for!

PART 2

IF YOU L♥VE HIM...

DO YOU love God? Of course I'm directing this question to those who claim to be Christians. And it's only because they are the ones whom I believe have come to recognize and accept the love of God. Judging by human experiences, it is pretty hard to feel absolutely nothing for someone who has given you everything and who continuously shows you how much they care for you. You may feel something, and sometimes even call what you feel love. To be frank, if your answer to the question I asked is yes, then know that whatever you claim to feel for God, even if you call it love, it's all because He first reached out to you, He first loved you.

That being said, it is not the character of God to expect from someone what He hasn't first given to them. So we can take this to mean, He wouldn't expect holiness from someone He hasn't first made holy and given the ability to remain holy; and He wouldn't even expect love from someone He hasn't loved first and helped to recognize and accept His love, and also given the ability to love in return. So, it's little wonder when Jesus talks about love in John 14. He's speaking not to the crowd but to His disciples. Let's read verse 15.

“If you love me, obey my commandments” (NLT)

While the New Living Translation reads this way, other versions of this Scripture read, *“If you love me, you will obey my commandments”* (for instance, the *Good News Translation, GNT*). Yet regardless of the version, one thing is clear, Jesus was informing the disciples, they who have received His love and had the capacity to love in return, He had **expectations** of them supposing they truly loved Him. He loves us too, and continues to love us. But He loves us in actions, not just words; we too are to show we love Him back, not just by feeling something, not just by words, but by doing all He has told us to do.

LOVE ACT #1

IF YOU LOVE HIM, YOU'D HEAR HIM



THE SCRIPTURES hold tons and tons of commandments directly from God and also from Jesus' teachings during His public ministry. And God is still speaking in our day to day life. He tells us what He'd have us do. So there's no way we can explore each and every single command in this book, either the one written in Scripture or the ones God is talking to you about daily through His Spirit.

To be familiar with God's commands, you should read your Bible. However, there is something we can do in this book; that is, explore two major commands Jesus Himself reveals. Now, this is not to say we shouldn't pay attention and obey all the other commands, but as we delve into these two in particular, you'd see how the others fit right in. And what might these two commands be?

Let's read from Matthew 22.

“34 But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees with his reply, they met together to question him again. 35 One of them, an expert in religious law, tried to trap him with this question: 36 “Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?” 37 Jesus replied, “You must love the LORD your God with all

your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments” (NLT).

Although the setting of the scene was not ideal because of the scheming going on behind closed doors, yet we are thankful for the occasion seeing that it served as a teachable moment for all. From the Scripture verses we just read, Jesus highlights two commandments. Let’s delve deeper to find out what they mean in what follows.

LOVE ACT #2 IF YOU LOVE HIM, YOU’D OBEY HIM



WE HUMANS often speak of love languages. How I understand it is this: that if we are in a relationship, platonic or romantic, even though there are endless ways for you to show me how you feel about me, I’d only truly feel loved by you if you do it by my preferred love language.

I could prefer you expressing your love for me by words of affirmation, praising me, appreciating me etc; or by quality time – you spending time with me and giving me your undivided attention; or, by physical touch, you holding my

hands, giving me hugs etc. There are also acts of service, you doing random kind things for me; and there's also receiving gifts. It's left to my friends, family and spouse to figure out my love language and do the needful, and vice versa.

And while our relationship with God is neither just platonic nor even romantic, we see that even God understands love languages. I mean He knew the world would feel His love if He gave us a gift – a very precious gift – and that's what He did when He gave us His only Son Jesus (read John 3:16-18). Now, He too is saying to us, “though there are many ways for you to show Me you love Me, here's what I'd prefer, obey Me.”

So we can say, God's love language is obedience. This is not to say we shouldn't express our love for Him in every other way there is, but we must know that this one way is the ultimate way to show our love for Him. And come to think of it, He isn't asking a hard thing at all, at least nothing we don't already have the capacity to do; and if you really think about what God has done for you, is this too much to ask? To be fair, the right answer should be no; it isn't. Is this your answer? I hope it is.

Still speaking to the disciples in John 14, Jesus reiterates His words but adds a little detail. Let's read verse 21.

“Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them” (NLT).

He had earlier told the disciples that He expected them to show that they loved Him by doing what He told them to do; now, He's hinting that to be able to obey His commandments, the disciples needed to accept them first.

What does He mean by this? Why do we sometimes disregard and disobey a rule? It's simple: it's because we believe we know better and so just do what we consider is better and perhaps best for us. Jesus telling His disciples to accept His commands was His way of telling them that they needed to believe and recognize His commands as valid, correct, absolute truth and what was best for them. Once they had this settled in their minds, then all He had asked of them and would ask of them would be regarded favourably and with approval, and this would make obeying them come naturally. Do you get it?

And see, as is God's way, He doesn't even say all this without telling them of a reward for their obedience. Those who obey Him could be certain of the Father's favour and expect to grow in their knowledge of Jesus.

But Jesus is not done with the subject, let's read some more verses still from John 14.

“Jesus replied, “All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them. Anyone who doesn't love me will not obey me. And remember, my words are not my own. What I am telling you is from the Father who sent me” (verses 23-24, NLT)

It's clear as day. Jesus Himself says no one will be able to claim to love Him, which also means claiming to love God, without being obedient to His commands. In other words, our actions must be associated with our claims. Too many people claim they are children of God without having any expressions of said claim in their lives. If this is you, Jesus is saying to you, "No, you don't love me! If you do, you'd do what I require of you, just the way I do what the Father requires of me thereby proving to Him and the world that I love the Father (See verse 31).

Taking a cue from how Jesus ultimately proves His love for the Father, it's clear that obeying His commandments will not always be enjoyable, even though it will prove beneficial. Nonetheless, we Christians are expected to be people who prioritize duty over feelings. Whether it's enjoyable or not, our priority must be to obey God.

LOVE ACT #3 IF YOU LOVE HIM, HE'D SEE IT



THE FIRST and greatest commandment is this: "*You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.*" (Read also Deuteronomy 6:4-5).

I know the word 'love' is used so many times already it can get one's head spinning. But don't be confused. Jesus is telling

us that the first and greatest commandment seeks to direct our attention towards our duty to God. It's a call for us to love God, to not just say it but for Him to see it when He searches our heart, looks through our soul and checks our mind, or better put, our thoughts.

I'm here imagining that just like we can identify colours clearly, God too can identify love for Him clearly supposing it dwells in your heart, soul and mind. You may ask, Why should God bother with searching, can't He just know through actions? Well, God's ways aren't our ways, and He can't be deceived by ritualistic acts of worship as we humans often are; He'd search the innermost part of us for the truth. He will not be mocked.

Have you yet wondered why loving God is a command? I have. Want to know what I have concluded? The first is this, that it's a command we are to obey because it doesn't come naturally for us to love God. I have often heard the saying that "the average human is a user." And I agree. In case you're wondering what it means, it means that as humans we are prone to continuously enjoy something/someone without thoughts of reciprocating. We carry this attitude even into our relationship with God, basking in the feeling of being loved permanently by Him and enjoying all the perks of this relationship with little or no thoughts for God and the things pertaining to Him.

Are you guilty of this? Or maybe you do have thoughts about God, little though. Jesus reveals that that won't do.

While revealing the command, He uses the word “all”, signifying the quantity of love you ought to have for God in return. Little thoughts here and there won’t do. It’s an all-or-nothing something. At least be striving towards the “all” phase, even if you’re starting with little.

Earlier, I wrote down Deuteronomy 6:4-5. Let’s read it.

“Listen, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength” (NLT).

You’d agree with me that aside the word “mind” replacing “strength”, Jesus had basically quoted the latter portion of this Scripture. But that’s not why I shared it. I shared it so we can see for ourselves another reason I believe explains why loving God is a command for us, even though by all standards it should be second nature. Moses is the one addressing the nation of Israel in the Scripture we’ve read; and as you can see, even back then the people needed to be commanded to love God.

In verse 4, Moses said to the people that “The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.” Think about it for a minute! Do you see what I see? He’s saying that in this world, loving God can be a challenge because there will be other gods, or better put, idols that would want our worship, adoration, admiration, and would like nothing more than to be the major influence of our lives. And, if I might add, these gods/idols like money, sex,

fame, power and the rest, which all cater to the desires of the flesh. They bring immense pleasure even though in the end they deliver one to an eternity of terror. What I'm driving at is this: these gods/idols always seem more appealing than God, making the choice to love other gods pretty easy, and the choice to love Him a rather difficult one. Yet, though difficult, it's not an impossible choice to make.

And, if your mind's made up to love God, though it's true that He'd see your love, I tell you even you would be able to see it. Yes, I know we can't see into our heart, soul and mind like God can; but I tell you your love for Him will shine through in your priorities. You'd put Him first. You won't be content with just continuing to receive from Him alone; you'd be interested in giving back to Him, and this will motivate you to devote time to first getting to know Him. That's how you learn what pleases Him, what acceptable sacrifice you can give to Him; and where else to know Him than through His word? You'd spend quality time in the study of His word daily; you'd also communicate with Him daily through prayers, giving yourself also to practicing His (other) commands in your day to day life.

But that's not all; when you also begin to put God first, the idols in this world won't stand a chance, since pleasing yourself is no longer paramount for you but pleasing God is. Do you now see why I say you'll see it? I'm sure you do.

Someone might ask, so how do I cultivate love for God in my heart? I'm assuming this question is the desire of someone

who no longer wants to keep using God as a tool to get their needs met and, also, someone who has decided to choose God to be Lord in their life. If this is you, then let's proceed. Now, although my answer might not be popular opinion, it's what has worked for me, and I believe might work for you too. This is what I believe you must do.

First, allow yourself to remember. The act of remembering is so powerful, yet unfortunately underrated. I allow myself to recall my past; yes, even though it's a scary place to visit, seeing that I wasn't the best version of myself there. But when I recall my past, I see me at my worst and see a God who wanted me even then, and was actively pursuing me. Even in the face of constant rejection, God was consistently still offering me a chance to be made pure, a spot in His family, and a shot at a relationship with Him. Who wouldn't love a God like this? He did that with me. He did that with you, and will continue to do so for others.

The second is this: Live in the present. Visit the past from time to time, but live in the present. You see, while God saved you in the past, He continues to save you even in the present. That, and many more things He continues to do for you. One of my favourite things to do, and I advise that you do also, is to be aware of what God's doing in my life presently. Everyday He is doing something. He is always working; and though some of His works are hid from our eyes, there are many that He allows us see. When you keep in mind to live in the present and train your eyes to see what God is doing daily in you,

through you, and around you, then you'll find yourself moving from gratitude to really falling in love with Him. He really is easy to love, I promise.

The third is this. Look forward to the future. How do you do this? Be familiar with His promises for your life. They are all so very beautiful and can be found scattered all over the Scriptures. You'd do well to familiarize yourself with them. I don't know about you, but knowing that there's a God out there who not only created every single one of us but has good plans for each of us is a whole green forest in my book. This is the God that deserves my love. He is deserving of your love too. You'll be more than convinced when He reveals what His plans are for you. You wait and see.

Here is a bonus point: starve the flesh. How do you do this? Be intentional about depriving yourself of indulging in the things that won't glorify God. Because, when you give in to your body's every inclination, you'd see yourself slowly drifting away from God, and whatever love you have begun to cultivate for Him will be eroded as well. So be mindful of the things you spend your time thinking about (watching and listening to too), the things you spend your energy doing and the company you keep; make sure they all glorify God (Read 1 Corinthians 6:12; 9:27).

LOVE ACT #4

IF YOU LOVE HIM, OTHERS WILL FEEL IT



“A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matthew 22:39. Also read Leviticus 19:18).

THE EXPERT in religious law acting based on the promptings of his counterparts, the Pharisees, had asked Jesus a question; he wanted to know what Jesus believed was the most important commandment in the law of Moses. Of course Jesus gave the response. He replied, *“You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.”* Then He gave a second equally important commandment, *“...Love your neighbor as yourself.”*

But why did Jesus feel the need to add a second command? Here’s what I believe: Although this other command is second in order, it’s actually intertwined with the first. There was no way Jesus could give the first and neglect revealing the other. So you won’t get confused, we’ll have to read something John said in 1 John 4.

“20 If someone says, ‘I love God,’ but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don’t love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? 21 And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their fellow believers” (NLT).

Though the New Living Translation (NLT) uses the word ‘believers’, please let’s not take it to mean only our fellow Christians, but humans in general (See 1 John 5:1), just like the word ‘neighbor’ in Luke 10:25-37 can’t be taken to mean only the person living next door, but must be understood to mean humans in general. That being said, John seems to explain further what Jesus has started to say, that when you love God (He’d see it, and then) others will feel it. It’s just impossible to truly love God and others won’t be impacted by that love. For it fills up your heart, transforms your life and spills over to everyone else around you. That’s just how it works. I can testify to this, can you?

If you can’t testify to it, I won’t conclude hastily that you don’t love God even though on the outside that’s what it looks like. I’m thinking perhaps you’re in a struggle. And this too is good. Yes, if you’re struggling to love others as yourself it’s good. It means your spirit and your flesh are contending; that also means there’s a part of you that’s aware of this command, this duty towards others, and desperately wants to obey it. I can tell you, you’re better off being in this struggle than someone who is aware of this command yet feels nothing. For in time your spirit will not only struggle, it will overpower the flesh and you will begin to consistently do what God desires.

Some ask, why is loving others a command if it’s supposed to come naturally to those who have experienced God’s love and claim to love God in return? I’ll answer and say, while loving others might come easy to some, others will struggle

with the idea of being loving towards others because it usually means being self-sacrificing. Loving others (the God way) is another way to define self-sacrifice. And I believe that it is so we do not give up on that struggle but continue to work at it (with the grace that's been made available to us) until it becomes second nature to us that loving others has been given to us as a command.

How then are we supposed to love others, Christians and non-Christians alike? Let's read something Jesus said in John 13:34.

“So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other” (NLT).

Don't be confused by the word 'new'. Jesus uses this word not because the command in itself had not been introduced/presented before, but because of the additional detail that's been added to it. And the detail is that He tells the disciples how to love others; they are to love as He loved; and this He did not without cause.

The first introduced command states that we are to love our neighbour as ourselves; but what if I told you many people don't even love themselves or know how to love themselves. So what then would be the yardstick for how they love others? Exactly! People who fall into this category should be grateful Jesus has not only shown us God's love but has also shown us

how we can love others. And now, even those who love themselves can take their loving others up a notch whenever they compare it with how God first loved them.

How did Jesus express His love again to others? He was patient, kind, not jealous, nor boastful or proud. He wasn't rude, neither did He demand His own way. He wasn't irritable but was of a good disposition. He kept no record of being wronged and did not rejoice about injustice but rejoiced whenever the truth wins. He never gave up on others, never lost faith, was always hopeful, endured through every circumstance, and readily assured them that His love would last forever. Now, let's explore how we can love like Jesus did. We'll explore each quality listed.

LOVE ACT #5

IF YOU LOVE GOD, YOU'LL BE PATIENT WITH OTHERS



IN ACTS 8:26-40, Philip gives us a demonstration of patience with people we meet. Now, while this Philip is most likely not the Philip that's part of the twelve disciples, he is however a believer and follower of Jesus (See Acts 6:5). This also means he had at some point in his life recognized and accepted God's love for him. Even though we don't have records of his encounter with Jesus, we can be sure he learnt about love being

patient either from Jesus in person, or from the apostles and disciples as they gathered together with other believers to pray and exhort themselves with God's Word; or in some curious way, from the Holy Spirit as He worked in him.

Luke the writer of the Acts of the Apostles tells us that Philip had at one time received directions from the angel of the Lord; and he had obeyed. His obedience had led him to cross paths with the treasurer of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under the Kandake, the queen of Ethiopia. Though his title reveal that he was not lacking materially, his visit to Jerusalem to worship and his reading of the book of the prophet Isaiah in his carriage on his return trip prove that he was lacking something spiritually, something his title couldn't provide him or even present him the chance of attaining. He needed something God was leading Philip to help him with. It was a need that his thirst for God and His Word would satisfy.

Following the Holy Spirit's leading, Philip goes over and initiates a conversation with the eunuch who is engrossed in his reading. Notice that Philip doesn't disobey the Holy Spirit's leading on the account that the eunuch was of a different race and colour as he; he simply does as he was told. This is how their conversation began: Philip asked, *"Do you understand what you are reading?"* The man replied, *"How can I, unless someone instructs me?"* And he urged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him" (NLT).

Philip sits with him and does what exactly? He graciously explains the meaning behind the portion of Scripture the

eunuch had been reading. When he was done, the eunuch had also heard the Good News about Jesus and had accepted it. He was even willing to prove it by being baptized. So Philip baptizes him.

Philip had expressed his love for God with what he did for the eunuch, by being patient with him – giving freely of his time by sitting with him and graciously explaining to him the things he didn't understand and needed to know, and waiting till he understood and even baptizing him. We too can practice patience in our interactions with others by taking time out for them, treating interruptions in our lives with grace, and others' shortcomings without annoyance and anxiety.

LOVE ACT #6
IF YOU LOVE GOD, YOU'LL BE KIND TO
OTHERS



PETER AND John, both disciples of Jesus, demonstrate kindness to the lame man in Acts 3:1-11. Their opportunity came one afternoon when they went to the Temple to take part in the three o'clock prayer service. Luke writes that as they approach the Temple, a man lame from birth was being carried in and placed beside the Temple gate (the one called the Beautiful Gate) where he'd sit begging alms. A mere coincidence? I would have thought so if only I believed in

coincidences. But I sure don't. I believe in God and His intentional and very detailed nature.

Anyways, Luke fills us in, that it was usual practice for the man to be carried and left at the spot by the Beautiful Gate. The purpose was usually so he could beg alms from the people going into the Temple. Now he sees Peter and John about to enter into the Temple and asks them for some money. But what he receives instead was kindness he would never forget.

At first, they *“looked at him intently”* and spoke to him. Now, it's easy to rush past that part without realizing this was an act of kindness. Since he was lame (from birth) and a beggar, I'm pretty sure this wasn't something that happened every time to him. Looking at him intently means they gave him their full and undivided attention, but not to look down on him and fling some coins at him or mere stare at him with pity; they even proceeded to engage him in a conversation that would soon prove beneficial to him.

From their conversation, we see the second act of kindness. Yes, it's true that the man's expectation was dashed because he was looking forward to receiving money from them but they told him they didn't have any to give. The story doesn't end there. Peter decides that besides money there are two resources he possessed that he could share generously with the man to support him. You guessed right, it's the name of Jesus and his faith!

Peter indeed goes ahead to share these resources with the lame man. That's a good part; but here comes my favourite

part. After Peter commands the man to get up and walk (by the power in the name of Jesus Christ), the man doesn't. Why do you think this is? I don't know either. What we do know from the story is that Peter and John don't just walk away after giving the command; instead, *"Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up. And as he did, the man's feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened. He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them"* (NLT).

It seemed that though the miracle was initiated by the command Peter gave, it came into its completion as Peter took the man by the right hand and helped him up. I absolutely love that. God was doing a thing, and allowed Peter to really be involved in it. And this reveals the third act of kindness the man received that day.

Now let's not forget that this man whose life had just changed for the better couldn't pay Peter and John back in anyway. They knew this from the get-go, yet went ahead to give him their undivided attention, engaging him in a conversation. Peter was generous enough to share with him the miracle-working power in the name of Jesus, alongside his faith. He also didn't let up on supporting him even if he had to literally lend the man a hand.

What do you think motivated Peter and John to go all out for this man like they did? I believe you already know the answer. It starts with L and ends with E. They loved God and expressed it by doing kind things for the man. Besides what's

listed, there are many other ways to be kind to others, I bet if you ask the Holy Spirit to lead you, He'll show you!

LOVE ACT #7

IF YOU LOVE GOD, YOU'LL NOT BE JEALOUS OF OTHERS



RATHER THAN being jealous, I'd rejoice when others are blessed. Did you know that God does not bless us the same way (all of the time)? Why is that? Here's what I believe. Just like our personalities differ, so is God's plan and purpose for us, even the timing they'll come to pass. It's all just different. We must be willing to accept this.

Let's take into consideration the encounter of Aquila and Priscilla with Apollos in Acts 18:24-28. As a married couple, Aquila and Priscilla were friends with the apostle Paul. They were believers and followers of Jesus Christ working together with Paul to serve God. While they were in Ephesus, Luke informs us the couple met a man named Apollos who "happened" to be in Ephesus too at that time and their paths crossed.

Apollos is described as a Jew, an eloquent speaker who knew the Scriptures well, one who had been taught the way of the Lord and taught others about Jesus with an enthusiastic spirit and with accuracy. But! Yes, there's a but, as he only

knew about John's baptism. Let's also take that to mean that Apollos knew only what John had said about Jesus.

Now, about their encounter. On the day that they meet, Apollos was in the synagogue preaching boldly. I imagine Aquila and Priscilla listening to him, observing and admiring his gifts; then suddenly they hear him saying something that didn't quite sit well with them. I mean they discover that his knowledge about Jesus is limited in some way. Now they could have gloated over this and thought to themselves, "Well, seems he doesn't have it all after all! I was wondering how one person could be so gifted in many ways! I couldn't stand it if he had it all!" You know what they did instead? They approached Apollos after the preaching, took him aside (introduced themselves to him, even complimented him) and then revealed what was missing from his powerful sermon to him. Scriptures say, they "*explained the way of God even more accurately*" to him (NLT).

So can we say in the end Apollos had it all? Ha ha! Well, I guess so. But even though Apollos had it all, I tell you the stars of this portion of Scripture isn't Apollos, but Aquila and Priscilla who weren't jealous of Apollos, feel threatened by his gifts or gloat over his inadequacy; instead, they put all of that aside and prioritized God's work and a fellow human being in need.

Do you know what would have happened if Aquila and Priscilla hadn't done the right thing the right way? A competition might have ensued. They could have interrupted his preaching and proved before everyone that they were more

knowledgeable than him, thereby dividing the attention of the people, leaving some more confused than ever, and causing a debate to begin for others, which also could have led to a series of bad things happening, a misconduct unworthy of any true believer in Christ! Eventually, God would have raised someone else to help Apollos (who was destined to be a man of great influence) to understand better; and they would have lost the opportunity to play a good role in Apollos' life and ministry.

Now, if I'm being honest, everyone is bound to feel jealous at one time or the other in life, Christians inclusive. What we can do with this negative feeling is not to entertain it, but combat it. How? Simply, you thank God on behalf of the person and all their gifts/blessings, openly complimenting them/rejoicing with them. Also, train your eyes to see how gifted/blessed you too are, practicing the art of gratitude; then finally, focus on what you have right there, by doing the most with it.

LOVE ACT #8

IF YOU LOVE GOD, YOU'LL NOT BE BOASTFUL TO OTHERS



LET ME ask you a question. When you discover you're gifted/ more privileged than others in some way, what are some of the attitudes you put up? I'd break it down, so you can choose which category you fall into. The first group are those who

begin to flaunt their gifts/privileges and even go as far as magnifying it in the sight of others, thereby provoking feelings of envy in them. For this people their desperate desire is for recognition.

And then there's the second group. This group does not flaunt their gifts and privileges; neither do they seek to magnify themselves in the sight of others. Here's what they do: their priority is to serve with whatever privileges God has bestowed on them. They want to help meet the needs of others as much as they can. They don't even want the recognition that comes with such acts of service. They are quick to return the glory to God, directing all the attention to Him who is the source of all good gifts.

A person who falls into that second group is Tabitha; her story is recorded in Acts 9:36-42. Tabitha a.k.a. Dorcas was a believer and follower of Jesus Christ. But that's not all. Tabitha was full of the love of God and love for God; she proved it by always doing kind things for others and helping the poor. Notice that nothing, absolutely nothing is said about Tabitha's finances. So we can't even say she was a rich woman. What we know is that she had been privileged to have experienced God's love and was out and about expressing her love for God with what she had been blessed with, and by the things she did for others.

Again nothing, absolutely nothing, is said about her trying to make herself famous, or appear very important through her acts of service. I completely believe she was the type to bless people and not making a fuss about it. I even imagine her

telling people to direct their gratitude to God after she had lent them a helping hand. In fact, the full impact of her dedicated service to humanity is not even made known to others, Peter, for instance, until she takes ill and dies, and widows began to tell and show him what she had spent her life doing.

Tabitha's story didn't end with her dying, you know. She became the first person to be resurrected by the apostles. Yes, it happened through Peter's faith, and on the account of Tabitha's good works, and of course God had mercy on her and allowed her live more years on earth. We already know that she did die eventually to be with God in eternity.

In case you're in the first category and you're struggling with a boastful spirit, here's what I recommend. Be intentional about doing the things the people in the second group do. God's grace will be sufficient for you to accomplish this.

LOVE ACT #9

IF YOU LOVE GOD, YOU'LL NOT BE PROUD TO OTHERS



THOUGH APOSTLE Paul didn't have the privilege of walking with Jesus during His ministry on earth, yet Paul can be described as someone who practiced humility in his ministry just as Jesus did. Unfortunately, Paul was often misunderstood and not readily accepted by the public. He was

even often criticized by fellow Christians, yet it is impossible to disregard all the sacrifices he made in his public ministry. One account where he reveals some of these sacrifices is recorded in his first letter to the Christians at Corinth, chapter 4:10-13 and chapter 9:19-23 respectively.

“10 Our dedication to Christ makes us look like fools, but you claim to be so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are so powerful! You are honored, but we are ridiculed. 11 Even now we go hungry and thirsty, and we don’t have enough clothes to keep warm. We are often beaten and have no home.12 We work wearily with our own hands to earn our living. We bless those who curse us. We are patient with those who abuse us. 13 We appeal gently when evil things are said about us. Yet we are treated like the world’s garbage, like everybody’s trash—right up to the present moment” (NLT).

“19 Even though I am a free man with no master, I have become a slave to all people to bring many to Christ.20 When I was with the Jews, I lived like a Jew to bring the Jews to Christ. When I was with those who follow the Jewish law, I too lived under that law. Even though I am not subject to the law, I did this so I could bring to Christ those who are under the law. 21 When I am with the Gentiles who do not

follow the Jewish law, I too live apart from that law so I can bring them to Christ. But I do not ignore the law of God; I obey the law of Christ. 22 When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. 23 I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings” (NLT).

In both portions of Scripture, one theme is constant, and that is Paul having to humble himself by giving up his rights. He in fact downplayed his importance for the good of others, for the Good News about Jesus Christ, and for the church in general. You’d agree with me when I say Paul was full of the love of God and full of love for God, you already know how he proved it.

LOVE ACT #10 IF YOU LOVE GOD, YOU’LL NOT BE RUDE TO OTHERS



THE ENCOUNTER we are about to explore is actually one of my favourites in the Scriptures. It happened between Peter (a Jew and disciple turned apostle) and a Roman army officer named Cornelius. You can find the story in Acts 10.

Since we know about Peter already, the record of the encounter opens with Luke trying to help us get familiar with Cornelius. He tells us Cornelius lived in Caesarea, that he had a very important position in the Roman army, and could be considered devout according to the law, since he feared God as did his household, gave alms and prayed regularly to God. But he was not saved. By this I mean he was yet to hear and believe the Good News about Jesus Christ. God who had observed Cornelius wasn't going to deny him the opportunity to be saved. The particular apostle God had in mind for the job was (Simon) Peter. So, in a vision God sends an angel to give Cornelius certain instructions, which, amazingly, he promptly obeys.

When Luke finally mentions Peter, he tells us he had gone on the flat roof of the house where he was staying in Joppa to pray. It was noon and he was hungry; and while the meal was being prepared Peter falls into a trance. Here's what he saw in the trance:

“11 He saw the sky open, and something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners. 12 In the sheet were all sorts of animals, reptiles, and birds. 13 Then a voice said to him, “Get up, Peter; kill and eat them.” 14 “No, Lord,” Peter declared. “I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure and unclean.” 15 But the voice spoke again: “Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean.” 16 The same vision was repeated three times. Then the sheet was suddenly pulled up to heaven” (NLT).

The interpretation of dreams sometimes can be a very funny business; so I can understand why Peter would be perplexed after receiving such a vision. He does eventually figure out the message God was trying to pass across to him with everything that happens afterwards. Now, what might that message be?

You see, God had a plan for a Gentile man to be saved, and had a vessel in mind to bring this Gentile man (and his household) the message that he needed to hear. Now, if this vessel's heart isn't prepared ahead of his hearing about and meeting the Gentile man, there's a 100 percent possibility that this vessel will be prejudiced against him, refusing his invitation, and end up standing in the way of the Gentile man's salvation. Oh, he would even have the Jewish law to back up his action! But God who wants ALL men (i.e. all humans) to be saved, and accepts those who fear Him and do what is right, wouldn't have been pleased.

So God worked on Peter's rigid (and very traditional) heart through that vision, making it more flexible and accommodating of all people, especially relating to sharing with them the Good News about Jesus Christ. Read what Peter himself says when finally he meets Cornelius and his household.

“28 Peter told them, “You know it is against our laws for a Jewish man to enter a Gentile home like this or to associate with you. But God has shown me that I should no longer think of anyone as impure or

unclean. 29 So I came without objection as soon as I was sent for” (NLT).

In case you're wondering how the encounter ends, it must be said it ends well, as Cornelius and his household weren't only saved, they also received the gift of the Holy Spirit! However, let's bear in mind that the encounter ends well only because God intervened – helping Peter so his interaction with those “different” from him will be courteous, cordial and non-arrogant. We too can take a cue from the lesson God took the pains of teaching Peter. If you love God, you won't be rude to others; you'd be courteous, cordial and behave non-arrogantly with others, especially those whom society/tradition/their actions scream undeserving.

LOVE ACT #11
IF YOU LOVE GOD, YOU WON'T (ALWAYS)
DEMAND YOUR OWN WAY WITH
OTHERS



THERE ARE many ways to understand what it means to demand your way with others. For instance, when we looked at how Jesus related with the Samaritans who rejected Him, we could see how He doesn't insist on their accepting Him at that time even though there are many ways He could have used His power to make this happen. He respects their decision and chooses to wait till a later time when they might choose to

accept Him. We see that the way Jesus was with the Samaritans is the way He was with us when we were yet to choose Him. He didn't demand His own way. We are obliged to reciprocate this action in our interactions with others, even and especially those whom we share the Good News with.

Another way to understand this is that it's a call for us not to be self-seeking in our interactions with others. By this I mean that the motives behind our interactions with others must not be centred on us, what we stand to gain from it/them, but more about them, what we can offer, what we can add to their lives. If you think about it, that is exactly how God thinks when He seeks us out; it's always for our benefit not His.

I'm suddenly reminded of something Apostle Paul said to the Christians at Corinth. I tell you it's one of the most beautiful words I have ever read. It's in 2 Corinthians 12:14, *"Now I am coming to you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you. I don't want what you have—I want you"* (NLT).

Can you see it? By saying, *"I don't want what you have—I want you,"* Paul was revealing to them his motive for continually seeking them out. And it had nothing to do with what they possessed materially but more about what he could offer them spiritually. It's sad though that even after all he did, and these beautiful words he spoke to reassure them, some of them still believed that he was sneaky and out to take advantage of them somehow. How sad!

While it was unfair for them to think this way towards Paul, you'd agree with me that their fear was valid. Back then

and even till now, too many people seek others out, especially in religious settings, just for what they stand to gain from the interaction/relationship; and many such are very sneaky about it, so sneaky they would have taken advantage of you before you discover what they are really about. Unfortunately, many of these people claim to be Christians, even ministers of God!

Every true Christian must be more concerned about the well-being of others and what they can offer them instead of being consumed with thoughts of how to take advantage of others. Our love for others must mirror back God's love for us.

Now please, don't get me wrong. I'm not saying Christians are not deserving of symbiotic relationships where there's reciprocity. What I'm saying is that our motives, when interacting/seeking out a relationship with others, must not be centred on us.

LOVE ACT #12

IF YOU LOVE GOD, YOU WON'T BE EASILY ANNOYED OR BOTHERED BY OTHERS



NOW, THERE'S nothing wrong with being sensitive if it means you're quick to observe and appreciate good things about others, even the things they say and do, including how they feel. But if you're quick to observe the things people don't do right, and are just as quick in being annoyed about it, then

that's where there's an issue. That kind of sensitivity if not handled will cause many friction in your interactions with others, and will even work against you being able to reach out to others with the love of God and the Good News about Jesus Christ.

Since, initially, we compared the disciples' disposition with Jesus', let's see if any of them had changed for the better. After Jesus' resurrection, Scripture reveals that He came and spoke to His disciples; one of these encounters is recorded in Matthew 28.

“18 Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. 19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (NLT).

What you've just read is the great commission, which details how the disciples would be required to preach the Good News, make disciples of these new converts, baptize them, and even teach them what Jesus had taught; and encourage them to obey all the commands of the Lord!

Now you must understand that these new converts would be like the infants and toddlers the disciples were easily

annoyed by and bothered by initially. Do you see the image I'm trying to paint in your mind? In the things of God those converts would be like infants and toddlers, and guess who wouldn't have any tenable excuse for turning them away? You guessed right! The disciples! In fact, they were obliged to receive them and encourage/ cheer them on till maturity. Just like parents do with their little ones.

Were they able to do this? I bet they did. The growing numbers of believers after Jesus' ascension is proof of this. I'd even share with you something Peter said that makes me even more sure that at least he did. See 1 Peter 2.

“2 Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment, 3 now that you have had a taste of the Lord's kindness” (NLT).

Can you guess who he was addressing? You'd be right if you say Jewish Christians driven out of Jerusalem and scattered all over Asia Minor. And you'd also be right if you said those who were younger than he in the faith! Do you see how he likens them to newborn babies? You'd agree with me that he had a tenderness and concern for them. What a change from how he had initially responded to infants and toddlers!

As for us, we remain in a world that consists of us who already have discerned and received the love of God and those

who haven't. Even among us who have come to God through Christ, there are yet those who are closer to spiritual maturity and those struggling with giving up their old ways. Add to that the fact that we are all of different personalities and temperaments; and we are all forced to interact with each other. How do we go about it successfully while being easily annoyed and bothered by others? The answer is simple, we don't. We Christians, just like the disciples in the early Church, are expected to submit that overly sensitive nature to the Holy Spirit and exchange it for a better disposition.

LOVE ACT #13
IF YOU LOVE GOD, YOU'LL KEEP NO
RECORDS OF BEING WRONGED BY
OTHERS



I'M SURE after reading this heading you'd agree with me that it goes against natural instincts to not keep record of wrongs. Yet it is what we Christians are expected to do. So we can take it to mean, though it goes against natural instincts, it's not entirely impossible for us to do, especially if we bear in mind how God has related with us and continues to relate with us.

There's absolutely not one of us deserving of God's forgiveness; yet He made it possible for us to receive it. He did this through Jesus' sacrifice and continues to do so whenever

we err. His forgiveness is proof of how much He loves us. Being recipients of that love should fill us with gratitude and feelings of reciprocal love towards God. He calls us who have received His forgiveness to prove our grateful and reciprocal love for Him by offering forgiveness, and should continue to do so to others, including those we might say are undeserving of it.

A vivid picture of what God expects of us is seen in Acts 9:10-19. Prior to those verses, Saul (now better known as Paul) had just had an encounter with the Lord Jesus on his way to Damascus. He was heading there with a troop of other vengeful men to arrest any followers of Jesus that he found there, planning to take them back to Jerusalem in chains. The encounter with Jesus had left him with an instruction and blindness. And while in Damascus he remained blind for at least three days. Yet even in that state he received a vision assuring him that he will receive his sight.

Now, to the main character in our story; his name, Ananias. He was a Believer who lived in Damascus. One day the Lord spoke to him in a vision, giving him specific instructions on how to meet up with Saul and how he would be instrumental in helping him receive his sight. Here's how Ananias responds to the Lord:

“13 But Lord,” exclaimed Ananias, “I’ve heard many people talk about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem! 14 And he is authorized by the leading priests to arrest everyone who calls upon your name” (NLT).

Ananias had heard that Saul was hurting Believers, as authorized by the religious leaders in Jerusalem. He didn't hesitate to bring up his bad record of Saul before the Lord. I'm of the opinion that more than out of fear to meet up with Saul, Ananias brought it up because he was trying to help the Lord see how undeserving of forgiveness and healing Saul actually was. That's how our natural instincts lead us to respond in such a situation. Let's read what happens next.

“15 But the Lord said, “Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. 16 And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name’s sake.”

What happens next is that the Lord commands Ananias to leave those records of wrongs behind and do as He has instructed. Despite Saul's past, Jesus yet had a plan for his life. And in case Ananias wondered if Saul would ever be held accountable for His past actions, the Lord chipped in that it would be a matter between Him and Saul. Thankfully Ananias obeys and Saul receives not only his sight but also the gift of forgiveness from the hands of a Believer! Yes, someone from a group he had persecuted injurously. I can only imagine how moved Saul would have been by that action.

I can't help but add that although Saul was the non-believer in these verses, he wasn't the only one that needed saving. Ananias did too. He needed help with being a person who

followed Christ's way, especially in the area of forgiveness. Christ's way is to forgive everyone; yes, even habitual sinners, the people we call undeserving. Ananias emerged from that encounter a different person. I hope having read all this, your heart does not remain unforgiving and stony; let it turn into flesh, tender like the Lord's.

Remember, anytime you want to bring up a tenable excuse why you can't forgive someone who has wronged you, whether or not he/she is a habitual sinner, the Lord is saying to you, "Go!" Forgive as I've forgiven you. That person can't be written off, for I have a plan for that life too. Let Me be the One to mete out the judgment, not you."

LOVE ACT #14
IF YOU LOVE GOD, YOU'LL NOT REJOICE
ABOUT INJUSTICE, BUT REJOICE WHEN
TRUTH WINS



WITH ANANIAS, Saul had gone from being called a persecutor to being called a brother. But, let's see how the other Believers react to Saul. It's recorded in Acts 9 still, but this time from verse 26-31.

Saul, now in Jerusalem, had tried to meet and associate with the Believers there, but that didn't go well. Scriptures reveal that it was because they were afraid of him;

understandably so. They weren't convinced he was truly converted, and worried that meeting with him and welcoming him into their circle might mean something bad will happen to them. Of course, Saul couldn't remain an "outsider" when he was now truly converted yet I can totally relate with the Believers' reaction. But something had to give. Here's what I believe happened next.

Saul kept trying to speak to the Believers. While at it, he told them the story of his conversion and his healing, and how he had preached Christ in Damascus, and the souls he had led to Christ. I imagine him repeating the cycle over and over until one day Barnabas heard him for himself, and saw how the other Believers reacted to Saul.

But, instead of reveling in the rejection of Saul by the others, he thought to himself, "I know this man has a past record of wrongs, but if Saul is truly converted as he says he is, then we would be doing him a great injustice by continuing to reject him as we have. I must right this wrong." After feeling the peace of God over the matter in his heart, Barnabas decides to approach the apostles.

In the presence of the eleven (no, twelve apostles, counting Matthias who replaced Judas Iscariot), Barnabas acts as Saul's "advocate and lawyer". He presented before them valid reasons why Saul should be allowed in their circle. Barnabas might have been the one speaking, but I believe strongly God's Spirit was working in the hearts of the apostles as he spoke. And that's

why in the end they gave in and welcomed Saul in their midst, and thereafter allowed him to go about with them to preach!

I imagine Barnabas being so happy to see all this happen – even if it meant he was doing something good to someone who had been bad, and who by all standards didn't deserve anything good! I also imagine Saul being very grateful to be yet again on the receiving end of God's love being extended to him by his now fellow Believers, a group he had wronged grievously. You'd agree with me that God would have been extremely pleased with Barnabas for what he did! He had modelled beautifully how God's love moves to make provision for us to be invited and included into His family.

If you love God you won't take pleasure when bad things happen to people (even those who have hurt you or have hurt your loved ones); you won't be indifferent when bad things happen to those who you don't know or have nothing to offer you.

LOVE ACT #15
IF YOU LOVE GOD, YOU'LL NEVER GIVE UP
ON OTHERS



NEVER LOSING faith in people is a mark of lovers of God. I pray I remain ever hopeful for what is best for people, whoever they are. I pray too that my love for people continue to endure through every (difficult) situation and circumstance.

You see, it matters that our love for others should look like God's love for us, even during challenging times. You may ask, is all of this possible? Believe it or not, it is possible. Philemon would agree with me on this! His entire story is captured in the book of Philemon. It's just one chapter.

Philemon was a believer and follower of Jesus Christ. He was also a worker with the gift of hospitality. His home was opened for believers in Colosse to meet in, even visitors like Paul (who was instrumental in his conversion) was welcomed to stay there from time to time. The Christians around could attest to Philemon being a man of faith and one who loved God and made sure those around him felt that love. Oh, Philemon also owned slaves! While in our day and time people no longer own slaves, back then I believe it was something that was the norm and a thing of high class, something which indicated wealth and means. While many slave owners back then were commonly known to be brutish, callous and inhumane with their slaves, we can trust that Philemon would have owned slaves to provide them with a means of supporting themselves, and would have treated his slaves well, showing them love and respect. This is why it must have come as a surprise to him when one of his slaves called Onesimus, one day decides to run away!

Onesimus, though hadn't been of much help in the home of Philemon where he served, had been given a name that meant useful, profitable and beneficial; and that name had not been changed despite his inability to live up to that name. It

proved that Philemon hadn't given up on him yet. So why does someone who has a master that treats them with love and respect, and even doesn't give up on them, choose to run away? Only he knows.

For a reason even the Scriptures didn't reveal to us, Onesimus didn't just run away, he seems to have made away with things that belonged to Philemon, say, money. A possible bigger explanation is that Onesimus was not a Believer at the time of eloping like Philemon was. For a Believer would know how to receive love and be grateful for kindness shown them; a Believer would not break their commitment to others or for that matter steal anything.

The aftermath of Onesimus' escape must have left behind a very confused and hurting Philemon, who was probably wondering where he went wrong himself, what he did to deserve such treatment after all he had done for the young slave. Though Philemon may have been confused, God was running after Onesimus.

While in Rome, Onesimus, possibly for a different minor crime, gets into trouble and lands in prison, where he meets Paul (whom, as you perhaps already know had been maliciously and wrongfully accused of sedition and brought from Jerusalem to Rome as a prisoner of Emperor Caesar). Hearing Paul preach about Jesus, Onesimus must have believed with proof of genuine repentance from his past misdeeds, including robbing his master, Philemon. And, as proof of his true conversion, Onesimus most likely recounted

his past to Paul as he sought to reconcile and seek his master's forgiveness.

On Onesimus' release from prison, and as he got set to leave Paul who remains in prison, the discussion of Onesimus returning to Colosse – his native place – and reconciling with his master there must have triggered Paul's intervention via the letter he wrote to Philemon, something Onesimus' new Christian heart must have acceded to. The theme of Paul's letter (or appeal) to Philemon was forgiveness and reconciliation, which, as Paul elsewhere explains, are by-products of love. Onesimus was accompanied to Colosse by Tychicus, another disciple and associate of Paul's, who was also the bearer of the Epistle to the Colossians.

What I however can't seem to imagine is the look on Philemon's face when Onesimus returns. Now face to face with the one who had hurt him by repaying evil for good, Philemon would have been faced with two options: to hear Onesimus out or to exercise his legal rights and put Onesimus to death, ending their relationship forever. But what does he do? I imagine he puts his negative emotions under control as nudged by the Spirit of God, and then grants Onesimus audience and reads the letter from Paul.

After reading the letter from Paul, he would have then realized that not only was Paul confident he would heed his counsel but God was relying on him too to welcome back this very flawed Onesimus, to continue to believe in him, to always hope for what is best when thinking about him, and to be

patient with him in the days that follow as Onesimus works to be a better version of himself.

God had asked a lot of Philemon; but then I imagine God's Spirit reminding him of how he had once been in the same position as Onesimus. He too, spiritually, had been a slave to sin, living apart from God, and owing Him a debt that he couldn't pay and also needing God's grace and forgiveness. God had freely forgiven him, and if he claimed he was grateful and loving towards God, then he needed to turn around and extend that same grace and forgiveness to the one that was in need of it.

Did Philemon obey God's leading? I believe strongly he did. I believe his book is included in the Bible so we can learn from his example, and won't think expressing love in this manner is impossible! I'm particularly fond of this story because it's between a master and his slave, not members of the same (biological) family; because, ever too often they are the only recipients of this kind of love from us. Hopefully, since we now know that we are expected to love even those outside of our family, people who are not necessarily part of our friendship circle in this manner, we would ask for grace to do so. God help us.

LOVE ACT #16

IF YOU LOVE GOD, THEN YOU'LL NEVER STOP LOVING OTHERS



WHEN GOD says I'll never stop loving you, what do you think He means? He is definitely giving you a promise that whatever happens in the world and with you, one thing that you can be sure of is His love. It'll always be there, He is saying; what else can be more comforting!

While some believe that only God can make such a promise to us, I believe that God has given us that promise and the ability to make and keep that promise to Him and, in some grace-filled way, to others also. You do know that love is a fruit of the Spirit, right? Now that we've covered that, you should also settle it in your heart that you're called to never stop loving others.

When you decide to never stop loving others, what you're really saying is I'm committed to all of the qualities of love we've been discussing so far, and added to that:

- To always show concern for the sufferings and misfortune of others.
- To always look after and provide for the needs of others to the best of your ability.
- To always have regard for human life.
- To always, as much as it rests with you, be on good and affectionate terms with others.
- To always be helpful to others.

- To always be careful when forming an opinion or conclusion about others.
- To remain selfless in all your interactions with others.
- To always have a refining effect on people.

The list is endless; but I know you get the picture. So, love for God is more than a declaration; it's in fact a call to commitment.

You may ask, are there people who just stop loving people? The answer is yes. The feeling that replaces love in the heart is called hatred. Some may call it indifference, but that is tragically wrong. There are people who stop loving people in general; sadly, the number of people in this category keeps increasing because bad things don't stop happening. That's just the fate of this fallen world we live in. Yet, there is hope. For those who feel hatred or indifference towards others, you can be made whole again by simply asking God to help you heal and work through your feelings. Remember, God still loves you. He'll never stop loving you, and you are not a bother when you approach Him. As long as it will take, He'll walk you through the process.

By now I'm sure you're wondering why I'm yet to give an example of one of the disciples/followers of Jesus who loved in this manner. Haha! I'm getting to it. What I want you to understand is that the minute each one of the original twelve accepted Jesus' invitation to follow Him, they were making that commitment to never stop loving Him and others. However, one of them broke that commitment. He's the one

whom we'll be looking at. His name is Judas Iscariot. We'd explore Luke's account of the event in chapter 22:1-6, 47-53.

Before we proceed, I know someone is thinking: "But Judas betrayed Jesus; so in other words, he stopped loving God, but he didn't stop loving others." Is that so? This I'd say: Jesus was not just God, He was also very much human, and a friend to each of His disciples. So Judas not only stopped loving God, he also stopped loving others. In fact, I put it to you that when you stop loving God it's only a matter of time before you stop loving people in the way and manner that you should. Let's look a little closely into Judas' betrayal; perhaps we can learn a thing or two about how to avoid repeating his folly. Let's start with a portion of Luke 22.

"1 The Festival of Unleavened Bread, which is also called Passover, was approaching. 2 The leading priests and teachers of religious law were plotting how to kill Jesus, but they were afraid of the people's reaction. 3 Then Satan entered into Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve disciples, 4 and he went to the leading priests and captains of the Temple guard to discuss the best way to betray Jesus to them. 5 They were delighted, and they promised to give him money. 6 So he agreed and began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus so they could arrest him when the crowds weren't around" (NLT).

Can you see what I'm seeing? This Scripture says concerning Judas, "*Then Satan entered into Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve disciples.*" What are you thinking?

Hopefully, it's not that Satan took over Judas' body. Here's how I see it: Satan seduced Judas. With clever and calculated words, he whispered a thought or an idea to Judas. Such an idea I believe that had never entered his heart before. And once he got up from that table and left the company of the Lord and the rest of the disciples, he had him! The rest as they say is history – thankfully good history for every believer ever since!

Many Bible Scholars believe Judas has always had a love for money. While that may be true, it's also true that it had never occurred to him before to sell-out Jesus in exchange for money until Satan planted that idea in his heart by whispering it into his ears. Well, that being said, one thing becomes clear that we who are Christians – if we are to keep loving God, which leads to and also means loving people – must be willing to guard our hearts against Satan's whispers.

If I were to advise Judas, I would have told him, “Don't listen... don't get up!” But Judas isn't here reading this book, you are. And so, here's my advice for you: When those voices start to tell their lies making God seem evil, and magnifying everything else, don't listen. Run back to God's Word, open your heart to it and allow it speak what is true to your heart. Make sure to linger in God's company! This is a practical plan to avoid Satan's seduction.

But there are many more you can add to the list. Simply take time to write down practical plans on how to avoid Satan's seduction; and if you can't think up new ones, ask the Holy Spirit for help. He'll surely come through.

CONCLUDING WORDS

OUR FAMILY OBLIGATION

I'M SURE you're wondering what I mean by family obligation. Well, when I say family, I mean a different kind of family than our biological one. During His public ministry, Jesus Himself had revealed that besides our biological family, anyone who does the will of our heavenly Father is member of our spiritual family. Don't believe me? See Matthew 12:46-50.

So, are you a Christian, one who does the will of God? Then, we all belong to the same family of God. And just like each of us have obligations in our biological families, so we do too in our spiritual family. To learn more about this, let's read something Jesus said to the disciples, of course to us too by extension. It's in John 13.

35 Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples” (NLT).

Do you know what had happened before Jesus said these words? Two very important things: the first is that Jesus had done something amazing and worth emulating! The second is that Judas was about to do the unthinkable. As for Jesus, while they were gathered together that day, He got up from the table where they all sat and took off His robe (i.e., the outer garment), wrapped a towel around His waist, and poured water

into a basin. He then began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel He had around Him. Of course the disciples were shocked because what He was doing, though with spiritual significance, was really the kind of job for the lowest servant in a household. Yet Jesus did it. And for good reason too!

He revealed the spiritual meaning as well as the physical one. The physical one being that He was giving an example they must follow. Now, this doesn't necessarily mean that we must go about washing each other's feet, but that we must be willing to serve one another, even if it means taking on the lowliest position and doing a menial task. We must not go about with airs about us. But, while Jesus was doing good, Satan had already prompted Judas Iscariot to do a bad thing; he was going to betray Jesus before that day was over.

In hindsight, the disciples would remember two things that happened that day in their "spiritual" family circle. One person did good, the other did badly. They'd also remember Jesus' words when He said to them, "*Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.*" Because by then they would have understood that beyond demonstrating to others who aren't part of the family circle yet associated with Jesus, that loving others, serving and doing good to one another was really the way to go, as a family obligation. It was what Jesus truly wanted them to do.

Now that we know that we have a family obligation to love one another (i.e. all Christians all over the world), we must

however understand that our love cannot be limited to just Christians. A wise person once said, “Charity begins at home, but it doesn’t end there.” Let’s read something Apostle Paul said to the Christians in Ephesus. It’s in Ephesians 5.

“1 Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. 2 Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God” (NLT).

Let’s take what he says apart. First, *“Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children.”* For a good reminder of the character and special qualities of God, you’d have to spend time reading the Scriptures. Yet just by what we’ve covered so far in this book, one thing you can be sure of is that God is love (1 John 4:8). He has a loving nature. Right? What else, that His love is reserved just for those who are members of His family? The right answer is no. His love is for every one, (even if we all know that members of His family have special privileges). Read what Jesus says in Matthew 5.

“43 You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. 44 But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! 45 In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the

evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. 46 If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. 47 If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. 48 But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect” (NLT).

Do you see what Jesus is revealing? He’s saying that God’s love is for everyone, even those who aren’t (striving to be) good and are unjust. Please, don’t take this to mean God is tolerant of their sins (endorsing their wrong behaviour); instead, let’s understand this to mean He won’t withhold His love from them. It’s His style to love one even while one is still a sinner (See Romans 5:8). In the concluding part of that portion of Scripture, Jesus commands that we imitate God in this manner. And this would mean that we are obligated to extend our love even to others who aren’t part of our family yet. We show them love, but we do not approve of or support their wrong behaviour.

The second part of what Paul says is, *“Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.”* Here’s how I understand what Paul is saying; and it’s in two parts. Here’s the first.

Exist In Love: The truth is, God loves us so much! That love was in existence before we were formed in our mother’s

womb; and it continued even while we were yet sinners, and will persist even when our lives on earth are over. We can't even completely comprehend God's love for us, can we! Some call it a relentless force; and they aren't wrong. Yet, we can't even fully describe it. I'm saying all this so I can point at the rich and satisfying life Jesus Christ died for us to have? Let's live it in love! Let's exist like we know we are perfectly and eternally loved.

Way too many Christians know about God's love but don't allow themselves to bask in it. They fail to revel, delight, take pleasure, rejoice in it, and enjoy it. And why? I ask. I'd never truly been able to understand the reason. Maybe, it's because the world has taught us that only the love of a parent or a friend or a spouse is worth basking in? Well, that is not for me! I make sure I bask in the love of God.

Let me share a funny story with you. One day, I was in the living room, cuddled up on my couch and scrolling through Instagram. There I saw a reel of a young boy singing *Someone You Loved* by Lewis Capaldi. His voice was amazing; but it was the lyrics of the song that made me cry. I remember saying to God, "I used to be like that, crying over a love lost. But I'm grateful now. I see that there's a love I can never lose! Thank You so much for being that Person for me, and for having such consistent love for me!"

I cried so much after the prayer, because I felt so loved all over again. And you know the beauty of moments like that? Not only is it healing, it empowers. Suddenly you are certain

you can face tomorrow because you know you'd always have a support system in God. And of course since your love tank fills up to overflowing, there's a certain exuberance about life that you'd have! Christians who can relate to what I'm saying are the ones who always have a positive outlook on life.

I can tell you all about it, but isn't it better you experience it? So from time to time, stop and think about God's love, and then bask in it! It'll help you carry out successfully this next thing.

Walk In Love: Jesus was so filled with love that it spilled over to others; it motivated His actions, His preaching, teaching, healing and feeding etc, but most especially His willingness to be our sacrificial Lamb! So we can have peace with God and the peace of God amongst many other things.

What does this tell us? It tells us that it's our obligation to be so full of love that spills over to others, love that motivates our actions and guides them, even when it requires us to be sacrificial. And, it cannot be a one-time thing; it has to be consistent all our life.

Did you know Bible Scholars say Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in Ephesus not only to encourage them in the Christian faith but also to help them understand the nature and purpose of the Church? It totally makes sense now why he'd tell them (and us) that we ought to live a life filled with love; and that by doing that we'd be following Christ's example. I believe you know that the Church is not the building. It refers

to our collective – you and I who are Christians. Our nature is love and our purpose is to walk in love.

Someone may ask, how do we walk in love? And I'd say, I hope that someone who is asking is someone who hasn't just finished reading this book; because, that's what we've been talking about all along! So, instead of asking how do we walk in love, because I believe we already have a picture of that, what we should be more concerned about now is how to remain committed to doing so. Going by the reason behind Paul's words, we already know that the repercussion of a Christian not walking in love is not exclusive to that Christian alone, it spills over to our collective. It gives our family a bad look, a bad reputation.

Since I believe we don't want that outcome, here's what I suggest we can do; live our day-to-day life surrendered to the Holy Spirit's leading. When we entrust ourselves to His care this way, we can be rest assured that He will cause us always to live in the way that's different, but good and pleasing to God... and others.

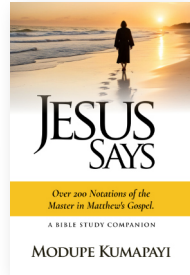
BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR



Letters In My Green Bag
A collection of ineffable, life-transforming ways to experience God.



God's Love Letter To You
A devotional guide.



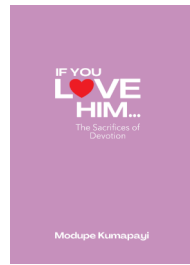
Jesus Says
Over 200 notations of the Master in Matthew's gospel; a Bible study companion.



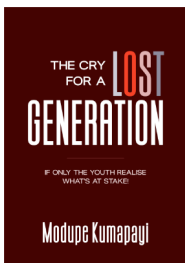
A Book For Dreamers
How dreamers transmute into achievers.



Take The Limits Off
A challenge to parents and guardians to release their wards to do what God wants and has ordained for each child.



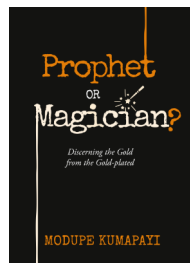
If You Love Him...
A book that answers the question, What is God's love? And it presents the challenge, if you love God, then what?



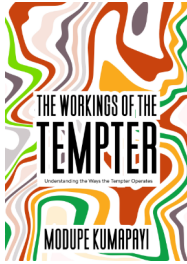
The Cry for a Lost Generation
A book that offers immediate help for anyone seeking God now and seeking to do His will regardless of their past.



Dinah's Defilement Is Your Defilement
A dramatic retelling of Dinah's story. A book that offers you a claim: You can separate yourself unto God and live free of Satan's defilement.

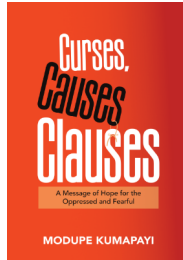


Prophet or Magician?
Prophet or Magician? Is a unique book, a mirror of sort, and reflects who God's true prophets are, and who impostors, charlatans, liars, false preachers are.



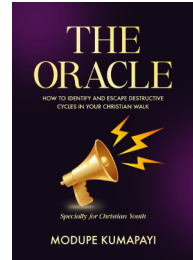
The Workings of the Tempter

The Workings of the Tempter is an unusual book; it retells Bible episodes of temptations and chronicles incidences of many who had fallen for the tempter's cunning ways of trapping those he lures into sin.



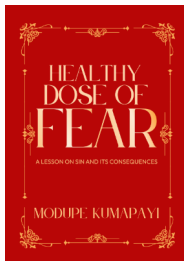
Curses, Causes and Clauses

Curses, Causes and Clauses is written to answer questions about curses, show you the way out of curses, and also teach you how to remain free from curses.



The Oracle

The Oracle reveals hidden truths about the Christian life. Opens the way to understanding why some Christians fell in the early church and how you can stand today and gain heaven at last.



Healthy Dose of Fear

Healthy Dose of Fear equips you to be a victorious, sin-overcoming, holy, upright, and heaven-assured child of God.

THE BOOK

Let's talk about God and His love, and its sheer unfathomable depth, inexhaustible riches! It's something we can feel and sense, yet remain ever baffled about. We could have named this book *The Riches of God's Love*, but more appropriately, *How Much Love to Return!*

In its two parts, the book first answers the question: *What is God's Love?* In the second part, we are faced with a challenge: *If you love God, then what?* Expectedly, no one reads *If You Love Him...* and remains the same. You won't sit on the fence either. All who have long confessed to love God must prove it. This book tells you how to Act Love.

THE AUTHOR

MODUPE KUMAPAYI believes strongly that God has impressed upon her heart to share through her writings the knowledge she has gained in her walk with God and the insight she has been given in her study of God's Word. Her deepest desire is to arm people with the truth; and her greatest fulfilment comes from watching people thrive spiritually.