



# The ENJOY THE BIBLE

Quarterly

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## Acquiring Godly Love and Charity

This is the first part of a follow-up to our past article, *Are You Being Taught of God to Love One Another?* (Second Quarter 2006) This, along with subsequent articles, will briefly amplify upon how God first generates His love and charity within us through the effectual working of His word. And then also on how He develops it, and even causes it to increase and abound within us. Please see the aforementioned article for the background to this issue.

**W**hen we first learn about being given “the adoption of sons” in this present dispensation of God’s grace, and especially about the kind of close and mature relationship that it allows us to have with God our Father, one of the most fascinating things we learn about is the kind of intelligent and insightful rapport that God has designed for us to have with Him as His “sons.” For in accordance with the very nature of sonship, upon being given “the adoption of sons” a son not only enters into a direct one-to-one relationship with his father, but more significantly he also enters into a *man-to-man relationship* with him.

As such in sonship a father provides for having a relationship with his son that is not only open, candid, and frank, but also relaxed and not stilted, being unconstrained by formalities or rigid standards. But more importantly, being man-to-man it also involves a genuine ‘meeting of their minds,’ so to speak. That is, a father provides for having a relationship with his son that is characterized by an equality of shared intelligent understanding and comprehension between them. He wants his son to be “in the know” regarding what goes on between them, so that he can clearly perceive and apprehend such things as his father’s reasoning and wisdom in what he has purposed and planned for him to do.

In fact by dealing with his son on a *man-to-man* basis a father wants his son to understand and appreciate the ‘ins and outs’ of all that takes place between them as they engage in the outworking of their father/son relationship. Accordingly the father wants the two of them to be ‘equally yoked together’ in a mutually wise understanding of the ‘whys’ and ‘hows’ of what they are doing, as they actively live their father/son lives together, and thereby engage in the business of doing the father’s business.

In short, therefore, the *man-to-man relationship* between father and son involves the fellowship of an increasingly comprehensive knowing rapport between them. It is a

### Table of Contents

<b>Article:</b>	
<b>Acquiring Godly Love and Charity .....</b>	<b>1-7</b>
<b>From EBM To You .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Bible Study Resources .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Contact Information .....</b>	<b>8</b>

fellowship which has their spirits intimately united and interacting in a mutual intelligent understanding of what they are doing, of why they are doing it, and of how they are doing it, while they go about pursuing all of the aims, goals, and objectives of their father/son relationship.

### The Same With Us


Having been given “the adoption of sons,” this is precisely the kind of mature and intelligent man-to-man relationship that God our Father has designed to have with us. Accordingly He not only has provided for us to intelligently perceive and know the ‘ins and outs,’ and the “whys” and “hows,” of all that He has designed to accomplish with us, *but He expects this of us.*

Wherefore when it comes to the issue of our sonship education, our Father expects us to be able to perceive the ‘whys’ and ‘hows’ of what He teaches us. In other words He expects us to clearly realize ‘why’ He teaches us the things that He does, and He also expects us to clearly understand and appreciate ‘how’ it is that each of the educational aims, goals, attainments, and objectives of our sonship education are specifically going to be accomplished within us.

In connection with this our Father also expects us to be able to intelligently track our progress in our sonship education. By knowing the ‘ins and outs’ of what and how He is teaching us, He expects us to be able to assess and know whether or not we are learning what we are supposed to be learning.


Moreover since we have this man-to-man relationship with our Father this means that we also should be able to frankly and intelligently commune with Him in sonship prayer about how we are doing in the pursuit of our “godly edifying,” and about how we are doing in achieving its various

## From EBM To You

 From time to time the subject matter of certain *Quarterly* articles provokes the desire for more information, or for a more in depth examination. Such was the case with our past article on the issue of being “taught of God to love one another.”

Since its focus was primarily on the need for God to teach us to love as He does, it did not deal so much with the issue of how He actually does it. Hence this prompted the desire to have a better understanding of how God goes about teaching us to love as He does, especially so that we can have the confidence that we are being so taught.

So beginning with this edition’s article we look more closely at this matter, so that all the more we can intelligently participate in this particular aspect of our sonship education.

 We continue to convert more and more of our audio and video tape studies to both CD and DVD. But since we do not have space to list the most recent conversions here, an up-to-date listing of what is available is on our website.

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aims, goals, attainments, and objectives. Likewise we should also be able to make wise and insightful requests and supplications with respect to our needs when it comes to availing ourselves of the full effectual working of what we are learning and of its applications in the details of our lives.

Wherefore as we progress through the curriculum for our sonship education, we ought to be keenly aware of its workings. We ought to understand and appreciate what each of its forms of doctrine are designed to do as we deal with them, and also how they go about effectually achieving their ends. For only then can we intelligently commune with our Father about what He is teaching us, and also confidently assess and know that His word is effectually working within us as He has designed it to work.

### **Understanding How God Teaches Us to Love as He Does**

Now there is no place where it is more important for us to have this kind of intelligent man-to-man perception regarding our sonship education than when it comes to our Father’s desire and determination to teach us to love as He does, and thereby to love one another.

For when it comes to producing the full range of godliness within us, by necessity godly love is the first and foremost characteristic for us to acquire and possess. For it is not only the root of all of our “godly edifying,” but as it grows, develops, matures, and flourishes within us, it functions as the very lifeblood for the production and growth of all of the other characteristics and features of godliness that our Father has purposed to produce within us as His “sons.”

Hence when Paul by way of commendation said to the Thessalonians...

9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. (I Thessalonians 4:9)

...it is not only vital that this be true of us as well, but in order for us to confidently know that it is true we, (like the Thessalonians), need to clearly understand the ‘ins and outs’ of how our Father goes about teaching us to love as He does.

Wherefore in accordance with the man-to-man nature of our sonship relationship with our Father, let’s make sure that we clearly under-

stand these things. For then we can confidently assess whether or not we are being “taught of God to love one another,” and can also intelligently pursue its proper growth and development within us as we progress through the curriculum for our sonship education and edification.

### **The General Process**

Very simply put, the general process by which our Father teaches us to love as He does begins with Him giving us some specific information whereby He is able to generate within us the *essence* of His love. In other words, right at the start of the curriculum for our sonship education He gives us certain information by which He makes it so that we can begin to actually generate or produce loving thoughts in our minds when we think of one another, which are just like the loving thoughts that He has in His mind when He thinks of us.

Then once the thinking of godly love gets generated within us, our Father provides us with some further effectual working of His word which enables us to not only keep on producing and sustaining the thought patterns of godly love, but which also enables us to begin to walk in godly love and charity.

Following this, (and as we move on in our education), we are provided with the capacity for our godly love and charity to start to grow and to develop. Then once it is actually growing and developing within us, provision is made for it to begin to flourish. And as it flourishes it starts to mature, so to speak, making for increasing conformity to the image of Christ in our lives.

Then later stages in the curriculum for our sonship education actually provide for our godly love and charity to both “increase” and “abound” within us. Whereupon our Father provides for our godly love to mature to the point of becoming “great love” like His, and for our charity to also become boundless along with His.

This is a very simple synopsis of our Father’s design for producing and developing godly love and charity within us, as well as for how as we proceed through the curriculum for our “godly edifying” our godly love and charity progresses from its seminal beginning to the full fruits of its perfection.

Now though it goes beyond the capacity of this article to engage in a detailed examination of all, or even of any, of these matters, nonetheless we can briefly amplify upon some of the main points in this general process. By doing so we can at least obtain the essential understanding of *how* our Father goes about effectually teaching us, and enabling us, to love as He does.

Let's start by first amplifying a bit upon the most important point in the overall process — the *generating* of godly love.

### **Generating Godly Love**

As was just mentioned, (and as it is with producing each and every one of the various characteristics of godliness within us), the process of producing godly love begins by first generating within us its *essence*, or its most elemental component. For the elemental component of each characteristic of godliness is very much like a 'seed,' which when it is successfully planted within us it germinates, or comes to life.

Upon this it then can begin the process of taking root within us and establishing itself as a living and functioning characteristic of godliness within our hearts and minds. Following this it can be properly nurtured and nourished so that it can actually grow, develop, mature, and even increase within us.

Now the 'life-bearing seed' that is designed to generate the beginning of Godly love within us is what God has Paul say to us in Romans 12:3, at the very outset of our sonship curriculum for the 'renewing of our minds.' And what God says to us provides for making a critical adjustment to our natural thinking. An adjustment that actually begins to effectually alter our natural thinking of ourselves, so that we can go from being self-centered, self-absorbed, and selfish, to that of beginning to strongly value and esteem others and thinking selflessly for their sakes.

And indeed just such an alteration in our thinking is precisely what generates the beginning of godly love within

us. For the elemental component of God's own love is His *selflessness* — selflessness which comes from Him valuing, esteeming, and thinking more of His creation and of His creatures than He does of Himself.

Hence as our Father provides for generating this very same elemental component of His own love in us, He has Paul say...

3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. (Romans 12:3)

Now as Paul says, our natural tendency is 'to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think.' And indeed this is true. For the pursuit of 'self' is fundamental to sin itself, and hence to the lusting of sin in our members. What's more, the evolution of man's ungodliness in this world involves men increasingly being "lovers of their own selves." Hence since we by nature are products of this world and of its course, we have been infected with the increasing evolution of men being "lovers of their own selves."

Accordingly, therefore, by nature we are overly self-oriented in our thinking. As such we not only make 'self' our primary focus, but we also make the satisfaction of 'self' our primary goal, even at the expense of others. For by naturally 'thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought to think,' consequently we value and esteem ourselves more highly than others.

Hence our inflated estimation of our own self-worth and/or importance, (along with the feeding of it), influences all of the functions of our mind and heart. As such it colors all of our thinking, making our attitude revolve around 'self,' and so producing an inner man that is busy with 'self,' and a walk that is composed of various amounts and manifestations of self-centeredness,

self-importance, self-absorption, and selfishness. All of which are in marked contrast to the various features and characteristics of Godly love.

But now the key to generating the elemental component of Godly love within us, (and so making it so that we do not 'think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think'), is not found in some self-help book. Nor in our own determination and efforts to improve ourselves by working to become more thoughtful of others, etc. Instead it is found in the last half of Romans 12:3, where God has Paul say...

3 ...; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. (Romans 12:3b)

It is through the effectual working of these very words, and the specifics of their information, that God our Father 'plants the seed' for generating the elemental component of godly love in our minds. It is by the mind-renewing power of this information working within us that He begins making the necessary alterations to our thinking, whereby our own natural high thinking and estimation of ourselves can start to change by weakening and lessening, and it can begin to be replaced with lowliness of mind and selfless thinking.

For when we acknowledge the fact that God hath dealt to every one of us "the measure of faith," (knowing what this means and the significance of it), and when we genuinely think of ourselves and of one another accordingly, this then begins to effectually lower our own natural high estimation of ourselves, while at the same time beginning to effectually raise our estimation and valuing of other saints.

The effectual working of this information begins to bring godly sobriety to our thinking by causing us to think *realistically* about ourselves and about each other. Realistically, that is, in view of the fact that not only are each of us equal to one another as "sons of God," but we are also mutually engaged one with another in our sonship lives. For

fundamentally this is what each of us being dealt “the measure of faith” entails.

And in connection with this our Father has made it so that we are both interconnected and interdependent when it comes to successfully receiving our vocational education and training as His “new creature.”

Wherefore instead of any one of us thinking ‘highly of himself’ at all, (as if individually we are more important than another, or are anything special in and of ourselves), each one of us should see himself as one part of a collective of “sons.” A collective in which each “son” is equally important, and each is equally needed, and each is equally provided for, and each is equally capable. For such is the case with us, having each been dealt “the measure of faith” by our Father.

Moreover each one of us should also see himself not only as mutually engaged in the same sonship edification and endeavors with every other “son,” but most importantly each of us should see himself as mutually dependent upon one another when it comes to successfully living and succeeding with our sonship lives. For such is also the case with us.

For in accordance with our vocation in our Father’s business in this present dispensation of His grace, (i.e. being the members of His “new creature” for the deliverance of “the creature”), our sanctification “in Christ” has put us into a living-union relationship not only with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, but also with one another.

And this living-union relationship, (with its interconnections between us, and its interdependence upon one another and need for each other), is not just some ‘theoretical concept’ that we are to pretend exists, but really does not exist. Nor is it some mystical, or undefinable thing that defies any real understanding or comprehension on our part. Likewise it is not something that is merely designed to make us feel

‘warm and fuzzy’ about each other, and thereby hopefully make us appreciate each other a little more.

But rather this living-union relationship that we are in *is a vital and living reality*. It is produced by the Spirit of our living God and Father, and He has designed that we acknowledge it and be suitably impressed with it right from the outset of our sonship life. What’s more, He has also purposed for it to become more and more of a functional reality among us as we deal with one another in our daily lives, and thereby for us to come to cherish it more and more.

In fact as we progress through the curriculum for our sonship education,

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its effectual working within us provides for us to become increasingly “knit together” and “compacted” in our living-union relationship.

Moreover as this takes place, we are actually enabled to function in an ever growing and developing mutual cooperation with each other, and also with an ever strengthening affinity for each other. All of which manifests to “the creature” that we are successfully acquiring all of the proper abilities and the full capacities that we need which will enable us to fulfil our vocation as God’s “new creature” that we are, following the conclusion of this present dispensation.

In short, therefore, with each one of us having been dealt “the measure of faith” as God’s “sons”; and with

each of us being in a mutually dependent and cooperative living-union relationship one with another as the members of God’s “new creature”; then no one of us has either right or reason to “think of himself more highly than he ought to think.”

Instead, with each of us having “the measure of faith” in our sonship and vocational status, the only sober thing for us to think as we think about each other is to value and esteem each other *at least as much as, or equal to, ourselves.*

### **The Planted Seed and Its Effect**

When through the effectual working of Romans 12:3 we do “think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith,” (and do so with regularity), then we have allowed our Father to successfully ‘plant the seed’ of godly love within us, and it has also germinated, or come to life within us.

Accordingly, therefore, we are enabled to generate fundamental thoughts of true godly love for one another, which are like those thought by our Father Himself, as He thinks of us as His collective “sons” whom He is vocationally educating and training as His “new creature.”

Now when through the mind-renewing information of Romans 12:3 our minds do “think soberly,” this makes it so that our former natural self-orientation with its general attitude of selfishness begins to weaken. With this being so, this provides for it to begin to be dismantled within us, as it is exposed to the growing influence and pressure of us valuing and esteeming others at least as much as ourselves.

And while our general attitude of selfishness is being torn down, in its place there begins to develop within us *a solid and growing orientation to others, and a corresponding attitude of godly selflessness.*

This is what is designed to take place by the growing value that we now

place upon one another, and the increasing esteem that we now have for one another, all because of the effectual working of Romans 12:3 within us.

Moreover it is this growing attitude of godly selflessness within us that provides the basis for us eventually being able to produce all of the various features and characteristics of Godly love and charity that our Father has designed for us to have as His “sons.” For the fact is that all of the features and characteristics of godly love are actually expressions and outgrowths of *growing and expanding selflessness*.

So then after planting the seed of godly love within us and effectually generating its elemental component, our Father’s next step in teaching us to love as He does is to work at growing and developing the newly germinated attitude of godly selflessness within us.

### **Growing Godly Selflessness**

Growing and developing the attitude of godly selflessness within us is what the initial effectual working of Romans 12:4–5 is designed to do. For when the specific additional and amplifying information in these verses does its job within us, it first works to cause us to think more in depth and more perceptively about the living-union-relationship that we have one with another as God’s “new creature.” In particular it causes us to think insightfully about its special nature, so that we are able to discern more about the genuine worth and the vital importance of one another.

By doing this, our Father effectually causes us to value and esteem one another even more. He causes us to increase our estimation of one another, while at the same time further decreasing within us any high-mindedness or superior thinking about ourselves.

In fact by what our Father tells us He actually causes us to develop a sincere and deep respect for each other, even to the point of including real admiration for each other.

But even more so, by doing this He

purposely causes us to start to truly *cherish one another*.

Now when the effectual working of Romans 12:4–5 causes us to sincerely and deeply respect one another, (and so we do start to genuinely cherish one another), then our godly selfless love has properly grown within us. It has attained the *initial stage of growth* that our Father has designed for it to reach at the start of the process of teaching us to love as He does and thereby to love one another.

However this is not all. For when our godly selfless love grows to this point, it has also developed the ability and the capacity to start to naturally

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produce and manifest fruit in the form of *godly charity*.

For charity is the fruit that is produced by selfless love when it is so strong that it cherishes others, and as such it actively seeks and delights to do whatever is profitable and beneficial for them, even to the point of gladly abasing itself and/or giving up of itself in order to provide for their good and betterment.

So then as our Father works at growing an attitude of godly selflessness within us, (so that it attains its initial stage of growth and it develops to the point that godly charity can begin to be generated by us), He has Paul add to the effectual working of Romans 12: 3 by saying...

4 For as we have many members in one body, and all

members have not the same office:

5 So we, *being many*, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. (Romans 12:4–5)

Now once again, by these words and the effectual working of their information our Father first of all teaches us to understand and appreciate our living-union-relationship with one another even more intelligently and insightfully. Specifically He causes us to apprehend and comprehend that the precise nature of our living-union-relationship with one another is that of a true *living-body-relationship*.

In other words our relationship with one another is one in which we have been so truly joined one to another, (and therein we have been made to be so fitly and ingeniously fashioned together that we are enabled to vitally function together), that we like the actual collective members of a living and functioning body “are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”

Now this is no mere simile, or a figurative representation, or just symbolic imagery. Nor is this an exaggeration. But rather this is truly and precisely what we are, and is also exactly what we need to be, seeing that in God’s plan and purpose we are His “new creature” in connection with the revelation of “the mystery of Christ.”

For with us being “members one of another” in “one body in Christ,” we are in the very kind of living-union-relationship with one another that precisely matches up with our vocation as God’s “new creature.” For “the creature” itself, (being *the creature* that it is), has by nature of its creation a body structure, with a fitting bodily makeup and composition. As such it has its role of being the embodiment for the earth that it is. And even though it was “made subject to vanity” shortly after its creation, nonetheless it was endowed by God with bodily features, and it was fashioned by Him with the capacity to carry out bodily functions for the earth.

Wherefore with us being God's "new creature" in this present dispensation of His grace, (whereby He is providing for delivering "the creature" from "the bondage of corruption" and liberating it from its present state of "vanity"), we have been taken by the Spirit of God and by His unique abilities have actually been joined to one another and fashioned together into a new kind of living-body structure; i.e. into "one body in Christ."

Therefore by being "one body in Christ," God has structurally and vitally joined each of us to one another so that we are in a *living member-to-living member union*. With this being so we have a real mutual need for one another, and are also vital and indispensable to each others functionality and welfare, just as is the case with the members of our physical bodies.

Wherefore we actually are "members one of another," with all of the traits that such a relationship has, and with the same kind of ramifications that such a relationship entails. And the reality of this ought to profoundly and materially affect the way that we think of ourselves and of each other. In short it should cause us to think just like "members one of another" think.

Now the bottom line to how "members one of another" think is that they always think *selflessly*. In fact they truly want to think selflessly, and therefore be completely unselfish in their dealings with one another. This is because of the clear understanding that each member has for just how vitally important, needful, and valuable every other member is, and because of how deeply this realization impresses them.

### **The Natural Selflessness of Body Members**

Each member of a body clearly realizes that since he is *vitally joined together to every other member in the body* that individually he is nothing special in and of himself. He knows that since all of the members are "members one of another" that he has not been designed to either stand alone and function apart from other members of the body, nor has he been designed to stand out and function with disregard for any other member of the body.

Instead each member in a body knows that by being "members one of another" that his own status and role as a 'member' *only* has real meaning, and *only* has functional life, when (1) he values and esteems his fellow members at least equal to himself; and (2) when in view of valuing every other member as such he functions in a way that actually serves to help them do their jobs.

Wherefore just as is the case with the members of our own physical bodies, individual members of a body are naturally more occupied with their fellow members than they are with themselves. Or in other words, they think selflessly.

Let's note the reality of this, and even amplify upon it a little more, by briefly looking at I Corinthians 12:12-27. For

here God has Paul use the illustrative analogy of the natural thinking and actions belonging to the members of our own physical bodies so as to amplify upon how we likewise should think and act being "members one of another."

As He has Paul say...

12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ.

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

14 For the body is not one member, but many.

15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

17 If the whole body *were* an eye, where *were* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *were* the smelling?

18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

19 And if they were all one member, where *were* the body?

20 But now *are they* many members, yet but one body.

21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to more feeble, are necessary:

23 And those *members* of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely *parts* have more abundant comeliness.

24 For our comely *parts* have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that *part* which lacked:

25 That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another.

26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. (I Corinthians 12:12-27)

Granted there is more to what Paul describes here than the single issue that we are after. Nonetheless the fundamental reality of body members naturally being selfless in their thinking is intrinsic to all that he describes, and is also clearly emphasized in much of what he relates.

But when we think a little more deeply about all that Paul describes, (especially about what a body member perceives about his relationship to his fellow members), we can see that he holds some very fundamental realizations about himself. Realizations which effectually produce and constantly fuel his natural selfless thinking and attitude.

For example, from what Paul says it is evident that a body member realizes that regardless of what ability or capacity he possesses, he does not have it so much for his own use as he has it for the use of the other members.

In connection with this he also naturally realizes that his own usefulness in the body is not derived at all from what he can do for himself, but from what he can do for the other body members, and thereby for the whole body.

Accordingly, therefore, he also realizes, (and is deeply impressed with the fact), that his fellow members in the body are extremely valuable to him, especially in view of his ability to be useful to them, and in doing so to serve the cause of the whole body by serving them.

Hence a body member naturally cherishes his fellow members for who they are in the body and also for what they are in the body. Consequently he cares more for pursuing and securing their welfare by serving them, than anything he can do solely for himself.

With these and other such basic realizations, a body member naturally thinks and acts selflessly. For by them he understands and appreciates that by being a member “one of another” with every other member, that he actually has been designed to live his life *for the sake of the other members*. And this grips his heart so much that it means the world to him, so to speak.

So then there is nothing more unnatural, or more contrary, or more disagreeable to the thinking of a body member than self-orientation and selfishness. In fact occupation with ‘self,’ or the pursuit of ‘self’ through such things as self-centeredness and self-promotion, are downright abhorrent to a member of a body.

Accordingly, therefore, body members delight in the renouncing of ‘self.’ For once again body members truly *cherish one another*, and hence they are devoted to one another. Wherefore a body member is the happiest and most satisfied when he is serving his fellow members by being genuinely helpful and profitable to them.

#### Producing the Same Selfless Attitude in Us

When through the effectual working of Romans 12:3–5 and its information we ourselves intelligently think about the nature of the living-body relationship that we have with one with another, (perceiving what it means and realizing what it entails); and when in doing this we reckon that we truly are “every one members one of another,” and the reality of this impresses us so much that it causes us to begin to cherish

one another; then our Father has effectually caused us to think like “members one of another” are designed to think. That is, we are effectually caused to think *selflessly*. Our Father, therefore, has effectually ‘planted the seed’ of godly love within us, and has also caused it to begin to grow into a fundamental functioning *attitude of godly selflessness*, which is both fitting to, and worthy of, a member of His “new creature” the body of Christ.

For the fact is that none of us can remain self-oriented when we truly cherish each other as “members of one another.” None of us can still want to be self-centered, or be self-absorbed, when through the effectual working of Romans 12:3–5 ‘self’ has been deposed from its place of priority and importance in our hearts and minds, and our fellow members in God’s “new creature” the body of Christ now occupy that place.

#### Just the Beginning

With this, therefore, our Father successfully produces within us the *first measure of godly love*. And indeed it is only the first measure. For the ‘plant of Godly love’ has only begun to grow. It has only begun to take root within us, and like a seedling begun to break the surface of the soil in our sonship lives. Hence there is not only more to its growth in the seedling stage, (as the rest of the opening issues in Romans 12 provide for), but there is much more to its growth as it continues to develop into the flowering and abundant fruit producing plant that mature Godly love and charity is.

#### Assessing Ourselves as Responsible Sons

This has been but a brief and simple look at where and how our Father begins to teach us to love as He does. Yet by knowing the basics of what Romans 12:3–5 is designed to do, it is sufficient to enable us to gauge how well we have responded to this first and most important aspect of our sonship education. And indeed we should assess ourselves. For the growth and development of godly love and charity within us depends upon whether we have allowed Romans 12:3–5 to effectually work within us.

Hence as responsible sons we should each ask ourselves, *Do I honestly think soberly as per Romans 12:3? And, Do I truly cherish my fellow members in the body of Christ knowing that we are “members one of another,” and so think selflessly for their sakes?*

— K. R. Blades

Our Father’s provision for the further growth, development, and maturing of godly love and charity within us will be looked at in future articles.

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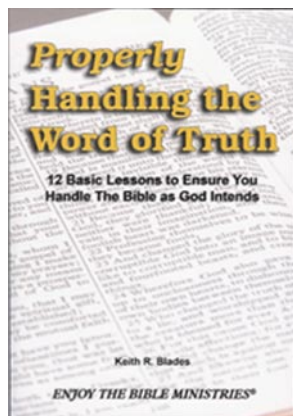
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