

MAY YOUR LOVE BE INTENSE

by Herb Montgomery
Director | Speaker



Ephesians 5:1-2:

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a *fragrant* aroma."

In 1 Peter 4:7, the Apostle Peter admonishes us to "above all" (which means "above everything else"), LOVE. I would like you to consider, also, the words of Paul in his letter to the Ephesians.

According to Paul's missive, we are invited to be "imitators of God." Just stop and think about that for a minute. What does that mean? This might possibly be the most relevant "lifestyle" question that a Christian can ask! When correctly comprehended, we are truly only asked one thing of God, and that is to be an imitator of Him. He has shown us how, which we will get to in a minute. First, consider what it looks like to be an imitator of God. Paul's reply is in the statement, "live the life of love" (verse 2, NIV). This is it! It is an invitation to live a life of LOVE! It means being loved by God and responding by allowing that love to awaken our love for Him and those we come in contact with.

Love is patient,
love is kind
and is not jealous;
love does not brag
and is not arrogant,
does not act unbecomingly;
it does not seek its own,
is not provoked,
does not take into account a wrong *suffered*,
does not rejoice in unrighteousness,
but rejoices with the truth;
bears all things,
believes all things,
hopes all things,
endures all things.

(1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

A word of warning: We CANNOT live like this by simply trying to do so. You cannot love by trying to love. What is needed is a heartfelt, dynamic encounter with His love for you. His love for us is the compelling force (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). We will only love, because His love *for* us has first awakened love *in* us (1 John 4:19).

Would you, dear reader, like this kind of life? We are invited to be imitators of the greatest Lover in the Universe. How? By simply allowing oneself to be loved by Him and letting His life-changing love accomplish all the rest.

In the words of Peter (1 Peter 4:7), My wish for you is, in the response to the light of His magnificent love for you, may your love for one another be "*intense*." †

Thoughts to Ponder

Freedom to do right implies freedom to do wrong. If a man were made so that he could not do wrong, he would have no freedom at all, not even the freedom to do right. He would be lower than the brutes. There is no virtue in forced obedience, nor would there be any virtue in doing that which is right if it were impossible to do wrong. Moreover, there could be no pleasure or satisfaction in the professed friendship of two persons if one associated with the other just because he could not avoid it. The joy in the Lord in the companionship of His people is that they - of their own freewill - choose Him above all others.

— E. J. Waggoner, *Foreknowledge*, p. 5

MINISTRY UPDATE

EVANGELISM! EVANGELISM! EVANGELISM!

If 2008 was the year of new beginnings, 2009 seems to be the year of EVANGELISM!

This year is off with a BANG as each month I find myself doing at least one ten-day evangelistic series in a new location. In January, we began with a quick weekend at Pleasant Hill, CA, and then quickly transitioned into our first evangelistic series of the year, which was held in Carson City, NV. Let me share briefly about both.

Pleasant Hill, CA

First, let me say that I have been blessed each time I have visited this church. This visit was no exception. But what struck me was the level of honesty and transparency I found among the members. Too many times we preach that God loves us and meets us right where we are, but then, as Christians, we give off an almost imperceptible vibe that although God accepts you right where you are, we, as Christians, do not. This produces a subtle negative environment in our churches that at times makes newcomers or the un-churched very uncomfortable. It also produces an environment in which members put on a good face, put their best foot forward each week, but never dare to be truly honest, instead feeling pressured to “look” and “behave” well whether they are experiencing true spiritual health or not.

This was not the environment I found at Pleasant Hill. The weekend was dedicated to being honest about where we are spiritually as families within the church and how to make spirituality as a family more practical and relevant within the time demands of our current culture. I was able to share a correct view from the Gospel of our Heavenly Papa, which is the foundation of our families’ spiritual health here, and some key insights into what I believe the Sabbath, in light of the Gospel, was meant to be like, especially for our kids.

Once again, I never once heard anyone “should” on anyone else. (Thanks, Kitty. If you’re reading this, I love it!) That simply means that no one pretended to have it all together going around telling anyone else what they “should” be doing. Rather, I sensed an extreme amount of honesty and a dedicated amount of support as a church to help each other, accept each other, with no condemning, but honestly facing where we are and pulling together as a whole to be what God has called us to be and live the life of Love.

It truly was a blessed weekend!



Three days later, I found myself beginning an Evangelistic series, as I said above, in Carson City, NV.

Carson City, NV

The only word that I can think of that best describes the experience I had at this church is WOW! This was such a warm church! Members were so friendly to those from the community who were visiting for the



series. So welcoming, so accepting! And real!

We had a great turnout from the community, and each night we were truly blessed as we penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of our Heavenly Father, what He feels toward us, and how He is calling us to live the life of Love. Life Unlimited!

God’s grace was amazingly felt by all during the ten days of this truly life-changing series for the many who attended.

Included are pictures from that series.

Elgin, Oregon

Next, we did a series in the small community of Elgin, OR.

I thought I’d share with you what one of the members there wrote about the meetings.

ONLY SIX MONTHS! Not much time to get our town prepped for Herb’s “Life Unlimited” series, but we were ready for the challenge. You see, this was to be a reaping celebration for the members of our church.

About five years ago, a couple of church members, Dale and Diane, had seen a need in the addict community for a recovery program that focused on Jesus, one that would let them become both sober AND free from their addiction. We revised the standard 12-step program, added Jesus at the core, gave it the name Underground Oasis, and off we went. Over the past five years we have seen many folks become free of their addictions, regain custody of their children, and reconnect with their own families/parents. Many of these same folks also had negative experiences going to various churches and expressed a desire that Oasis have a church service... so we created “Simple Church” in our home on Friday nights for those folks and others who would not be comfortable in a typical church setting. We had been holding meetings for several months before Herb got here with attendance running between 12-18 people. Another member uses her business as a massage therapist to reach people in the community, and other members were active in their own areas of the community, inviting friends to come... In short, we were preparing the field for Herb.

The church rented the largest hall in our town of 1,710 folks, prayed and held our breath. Wow! We had some 160 visitors, and they came night after night. On the night we passed around a sign-up sheet for further studies, we were literally blown away by the number of people who signed up. We spent quite some time as a group that night trying to figure out how to accommodate everyone on the list. Dale and Diane’s house could never hold that many people, so Kenna and Corey opened up their home to another Simple Church group that currently meets on Wednesday nights.

Each group is hosting 14-20 people (our poor pastor is kept running!) and more are contacting us, wanting to come. The result is that walls are being torn down to create more room in both homes! Simple Church is generating so much enthusiasm from its members that others are wanting to experience it also. So Herb, see what you've started?

What is Simple Church? Our two groups have different formats. Ours starts at 7 p.m. on Fridays with potluck finger foods and visiting; next, we spend 30 minutes or so letting people talk about problems they or their friends have, and we do individual prayer for these people; next, we do a 60-minute Bible study and end by finishing our treats and building relationships/

chatting. The other group uses Herb's "Life Unlimited" DVDs with food and prayer needs before and discussion after the presentation, all the while building relationships and friendships.

So can you do Simple Church after Herb leaves? Of course you can! And you can tailor it to fit the people in your own community. Just remember, the recipe is Jesus, food, friendship, caring, and study. Add it up and see what YOU come up with.

With love in Christ,

Diane and Dale Johnston †

Righteousness is holiness, likeness to God, and "God is love." 1 John 4:16. It is conformity to the law of God, for "all Thy commandments are righteousness" (Psalm 119:172), and "love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10). Righteousness is love, and love is the light and the life of God. The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him.

Righteousness is not obtained through painful struggles or wearisome toil, not by gift or sacrifice, but it is freely given to every soul who hungers and thirsts to receive it. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat, . . . without money and without price." "Their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord," and, "This is His name whereby He shall be called, The Lord Our Righteousness." Isaiah 55:1; 54:17; Jeremiah 23:6

No human agent can supply that which will satisfy the hunger and thirst of the soul. But Jesus says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." Revelation 3:20; John 6:35.

As we need food to sustain our physical strength, so do we need Christ, the Bread from heaven, to sustain spiritual life and impart strength to work the works of God. As the body is continually receiving the nourishment that sustains life and vigor, so the soul must be constantly communing with Christ, submitting to Him and depending wholly upon Him.

As the weary traveler seeks the spring in the desert and, finding it, quenches his burning thirst, so will the Christian thirst for and obtain the pure water of life, of which Christ is the fountain.

As we discern the perfection of our Savior's character, we shall desire to become wholly transformed and renewed in the image of His purity. The more we know of God, the higher will be our ideal of character and the more earnest our longing to reflect His likeness. A divine element combines with the human when the soul reaches out after God and the longing heart can say, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him." Psalm 62:5.

If you sense a need in your soul, if you hunger and thirst after righteousness, this is evidence that Christ has touched your heart, in order that He may be sought unto to do for you, through the endowment of the Holy Spirit, those things which it is impossible for you to do for yourself. We need not seek to quench our thirst at shallow streams; for the great fountain is just above us, and of its abundant waters we may freely drink, if we will rise a little higher in the pathway of faith.

The words of God are the wellsprings of life. As you seek for those living

springs, you will, through the Holy Spirit, be brought into communion with Christ. Familiar truths will present themselves to your mind in a new aspect, texts of Scripture will burst upon you with a new meaning like a flash of light, you will see the relationship of other truths to the work of redemption, and you will know that Christ is leading you. A divine Teacher is at your side.

Jesus said, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." John 4:14. As the Holy Spirit opens the truth to you, the most precious experiences will come to you, and you will long to speak to others of the comforting things that have been revealed to you. When brought into association with them, you will communicate some fresh thought in regard to the character or the work of Christ. You will have some fresh revelation of His pitying love to impart to those who love Him and to those who love Him not.

"Give, and it shall be given unto you" (Luke 6:38); for the word of God is "a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams of Lebanon" (Song of Solomon 4:15). The heart that has once tasted the love of Christ cries out continually for a deeper draft, and as you impart you will receive in richer and more abundant measure. Every revelation of God to the soul increases the capacity to know and to love. The continual cry of the heart is, "More of Thee," and ever the Spirit's answer is, "Much more." Romans 5:9,10. For our God delights to do "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Ephesians 3:20. To Jesus, who emptied Himself for the salvation of lost humanity, the Holy Spirit was given without measure. So it will be given to every follower of Christ when the whole heart is surrendered for His indwelling. Our Lord Himself has given the command, "Be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18), and this command is also a promise of its fulfillment. It was the good pleasure of the Father that in Christ should "all the fullness dwell," and "in Him ye are made full." Colossians 1:19, R.V.; 2:10, R.V.

God has poured out His love unstintingly, as the showers that refresh the earth. He says, "Let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together." "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." Isaiah 45:8; 41:17, 18.

"Of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." John 1:16.

E. G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessings*, pp.18-21

TESTIMONIES . . .

"We had been to _____, summer of 2007, and just returned home. Our first Sabbath back at church, _____ shared with his Sabbath School class the excitement and renewed zeal we felt through Herb Montgomery's message. In that class, _____ and _____ were attentive to every word. After church, _____ talked to _____ more about Herb, and he gave her the website.

_____ and _____ went home and began listening to Herb's sermons online. They listened to all of

them. They drank it in. They were so hungry for God's love! _____ heart was crying out to know that God loved her as she is, and He sent Herb's message to her that day in SS class.

"... The ripples continue farther and farther away ...I think we will have to wait until heaven to see just how far the ripples will travel!"

They went to Portland, OR to Herb's seminar and continued to drink in the message. _____ shares

that website with everyone.

Our church is having Herb come for a seminar here, and we praise God that He connected Herb's message to two people who desperately needed to hear it.

The ripples continue farther and farther away from that little camp-meeting in 2007. I think we will have to wait until heaven to see just how far the ripples will travel! What blessings God is bringing and changing lives! _____ and _____ are an integral part of our church now. I know this will not be the end of their story. Stay tuned! We are looking forward to Herb's visit in the fall."

—Anon.



CALENDAR

April 13-17, 2009

Pine Hills Adventist Academy
Auburn, CA
530.885.9447

April 24-May 3, 2009

Lakeport SDA Church
Lakeport, CA
707.263.6002

May 15-16, 2009

Shasta Lake Bible Fellowship
Redding, CA
530.275.1300

May 21-23, 2009

Penn Valley SDA Church
Penn Valley, CA
530.432.2479

June 2-6, 2009

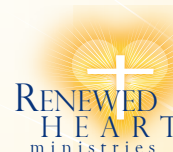
Iowa-Missouri Camp Meeting
Centralia, MO
515.223.1197

June 12-13, 2009

Greenville SDA Church
Greenville, SC
864.233.9849

June 19-20, 2009

Fairfield Community SDA Church
Fairfield, CA
707.426.6720



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