

Let's Fall in Love with God
Chapter 12: Spiritual Growth Inhibitors
(John Henry Alan, edited by Bob Clarkson)
{ Absorb it! } { 185 }

Settling for Second Hand Knowledge

Many Christians are so busy that they know God only by hearsay. We hear, but fail to experience it for ourselves. We too easily settle for substitutes rather than the real thing. Under these circumstances, the most we can expect to hear is the opinions of others about what God says.

Wanting Things Instead of God

Some want things *from* God instead a relationship *with* God. We are more interested in the gifts than the giver. God wants to give us Himself. Separated from God, the His gifts can actually become distractions from a relationship with Him. When we take the gifts from Him instead of waiting for Him to give them to us, we become thieves.

Living Comfortably with Sins

Anything that comes between us and intimacy with God is simply put, sin. Sin might be best defined as crimes against relationship. Sin can also be defined as anything that is done which is relationally destructive. All sin can be traced back to 3 basic tendencies in us:

(seeking *indulgence*/pleasure/trouble-free life}
{seeking *applause*/affirmation/reputation}

Let's Fall in Love with God -- John Henry Alan

{seeking *to be worshipped*/emulated/followed}
— all for personal gain and at the expense of others).

Estranged by Guilt and Shame { 186 }

Adam and Eve were removed from the Garden of Eden because they broke relationship with God by rejecting their relationship with God by disobeying God's only rule/demand. The evidence of the broken relationship is that they hid from God once they knew that they were naked, caught in the act of disobedience and overwhelmed with shame. All of us recoil from others when we feel guilt or shame for something we have done wrong to them. One example, adultery, is the most common reason for divorce. Infidelity is one of the most emotionally charged words in any language or culture!

Misunderstanding Forgiveness { 187 }

The only pathway to intimacy with God is forgiveness of our relationship crimes (sins). Now to be sure, God does not forgive in the manner which most think. God cannot just let the perpetrator go free and still provide justice to the victim. God's forgiveness is like the motor cyclists' saying, *Pay it forward*. God *pays forward* the sins to Jesus, so that the due penalty of our crimes is *paid in full* by Him. No sin goes unpunished by God. God declared emphatically, "Vengeance is mine, I *will* repay." God will either let you pay your punishment forward to Jesus, or He will allow you to serve your own sentence (separation from relationship with God). That is the single

Let's Fall in Love with God -- John Henry Alan

message of the Gospel.

Holding Others Accountable { 188 }

The matter of personal accountability is another hindrance to living abandoned to intimacy with God. It is never our responsibility or authority as Christians to condemn anyone (for their actual sins or perceived sins — things which in our opinion are sin). I suggest that you think twice before you do so. Unfortunately, false teaching in the church, in which we are to hold each other accountable for moral, ethical or legal behaviors creates relational carnage.

Double Jeopardy

God has appointed government and judicial systems to handle civil consequences. God handles all spiritual consequences. Yet, many Christians actually add their additional penalties to what the civil justice system has devised. This is nothing short of double jeopardy, which is illegal by any system of justice in history. For all spiritual matters, personal matters between a man and God, are adjudicated by God. He is the judge. Get out of His chair. Don't even approach the bench!

The Difference Between Fellowship and Relationship { 189 }

The importance of this one thing in the life of the believer is vastly underestimated. Sin (breaking relationship) is responsible for most of our problems. I

Let's Fall in Love with God -- John Henry Alan

believe all will agree that our greatest pleasures in life come from good relationships and our greatest pains come from broken ones. The essence of the life of Jesus is that He chose to love everyone, even His enemies. He even asked God to "forgive" those responsible for His crucifixion, as they stood at the foot of His Cross jeering, as He agonizingly suffocated, naked until He died. And to this day, Jesus offers a personal relationship with Himself to everyone. And Jesus only, ever treated harshly those who came between people and their attempts to worship God or those who tried to negate the truth of God. And, to be sure, Jesus' life and messages about God and mankind were, and still are, perfect.

Silenced by Guilt and Shame { 190 }

The reason sins committed by Christians hinder their intimacy with God, is that the guilt and shame associated with them, generally causes Christians to cower from God and withdraw from His Presence. We have been sidelined by the lie of Satan, "If you can't walk the walk, then you can't talk the talk." Your personal purity has no bearing whatsoever on your testimony as a believer in Jesus. Jesus said that your testimony is your unconditional love for others which matches His love for them. John 13:34-35

Feeling Unworthy to Speak

Neither you nor your pastor nor your most righteous acquaintance are worthy to proclaim the good news of the Gospel. However, even a donkey's lips were

Let's Fall in Love with God -- John Henry Alan

used to save Balaam from the sword of an angel. The message of the Gospel is its own authentication and credibility. The *foolishness* of preaching the Gospel, is not the preaching. (Every salesman is a preacher of his product's gospel.). The foolishness is that the purest message in the universe, when spoken by soiled lips, is not in any way sullied! So, just because you don't live a sinless life, don't stop bragging about your personal relationship with God, in Jesus Christ.

Only God Can Pay It Forward { 191 }

Many respected '*Christian*' teachers, proclaim from their pulpits and lecterns, the false teaching of moralism. The proper response to acknowledged sin is, "Thank You, Lord, that Jesus has paid for this sin already!" Then go about your Father's work again immediately. One sacrifice and one repentance is all that God required for all of the sins of any one who in faith lets God *pay their sins forward* to Christ. But to give thanks in everything is the ultimate in freedom from guilt and shame. When a Christian joyfully thanks God for the forgiveness already applied to their entire life, and instantly restores their communion with the Holy Spirit, they can immediately hear His guidance and walk in it. This is truly what the Bible calls walking in the Spirit.

Hiding from God in Shame { 192 }

We will all likely continue to commit sin until our physical death. And even the Apostle Paul declared in

Let's Fall in Love with God -- John Henry Alan

Romans chapter 7, "the things I want to do I don't do and the things I do not want to do, I do. Oh, miserable man that I am." And in Romans chapter 8, he states, "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." So until we stop cowering in guilt, shame and fear, Satan has us immobilized. When you let your selfish spirit break relationship with anyone, remember this, that since God has applied our punishment to Jesus, there is no need for this to come between us and our intimacy with God. Get back up, admit to the one you have wronged, open your heart to relationship with them again, and take one step closer to God. The more you practice this, the more you will fall in love with God and the less you will continue to sin. In this practice, you will also eventually find complete freedom from guilt, shame and fear.

Lost Decades { 193 }

For several decades of my own life, even while I was a practicing ordained minister, I was hindered from developing intimacy with God by this very issue. I had been taught that if I did not walk the walk of Jesus, then I should not open my mouth to talk the talk of Jesus. So my guilt and shame, reinforced by this erroneous teaching (of which I was also guilty of teaching), caused me avoid God altogether for weeks or months until I felt that I would not sin this particular sin again and could step back into God's presence. Oh, that I could buy back that lost time!

Admission, Not Condemnation { 194 }

Let's Fall in Love with God -- John Henry Alan

Yes, we need to admit that we have done wrong, instead of hypocritically pretending that we have not or secretly hiding the fact that we have. Many Christians are hated because their loveless, self-righteous superior attitude fails to deliver the love of God. Rather, Christians exude their disgust with those who have openly committed sin or admit that they have privately committed sin.

Not Believing That I Am Perfect { 195 }

Know that our most significant other, God (this includes Jesus and the Holy Spirit), will never leave us or forsake us. He never holds our sin against us. The penalty has been paid by Jesus. Now, we can come boldly anytime, especially after committing sin, into His presence. Actually the Holy Spirit within us prays to God for us during the moments in which we are committing sin. By the way, the Holy Spirit does not come out of us while we are in the very act of sin and then come back in when we feel unashamed enough to invite Him back in. He is present in us during the act of sin.

Fortunately the Holy Spirit keeps us in the perfection of Jesus. Beware, however, that paying our sins forward to Jesus, does not give us a *get out of hell free* card. Those who would use God's grace as a license to commit sin, have not really become intimate with Jesus. They may have proclaimed that they have, but the evidence is irrefutable to the contrary. It is not action, but the motive which God uses to receive us into the Kingdom of God. And His Kingdom is the only one in history which is comprised of only those subjects who ask to be a citizen and volunteer to live under His authority!

Let's Fall in Love with God -- John Henry Alan

Making the Bible an Idol { 196 }

Why has God given us the scriptures? It is because by reading the scriptures we can know God. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." Romans 10:17 But, the scriptures are not an end in themselves. We hear them talked about as though they were an end in themselves. No man can believe more in the verbal inspiration of the scriptures as originally given than I do, but verbal inspiration or any other theory of inspiration that makes the Bible an end in itself is a dangerous thing. The purpose of the Bible is not to replace God. The purpose of the Bible is to lead us to God, not to be an end in itself.

Not Realizing That the Bible Is a Love Story

The central theme of the Bible is relationship, and in particular healthy ones. The original 10 Commandments and Jesus' one and only commandment are exactly the same on this issue. The command of Jesus is simply the original 10 on steroids! It is an impossible command to obey without the presence of the Holy Spirit within us. That is why the Holy Spirit was given to us.

You Choose the Voices that Inform Your Soul { 197 }

The only Christians you want to listen to are the ones who give you more of a hunger for God. You cannot know all that God has. But you can know all that God will reveal to your soul, which is infinitely more than you now know. The church of Christ needs to return to teaching

Let's Fall in Love with God -- John Henry Alan

this. She needs to preach God Himself and that all of the gifts of God are ours the instant we receive Jesus. God will continue to reveal Himself. All the blessings of God will come along with God. We want the fullness of the Holy Spirit to fill us. We want godly living. We want a love divine, like Jesus demonstrated in giving His life for His friends. We want all of that.

Thieves Rather Than Beneficiaries { 198 }

But if we take His gifts, apart from God himself, we have only become thieves. If you find God, then you find all these things in God. You now say I've accepted Christ. And that is very wonderful and good. Paul had been converted and was one of the world's great Christians. But he still wrote, "that I may know Him *intimately* and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings and be made conformable unto His death". Philippians 3:10. Many want to know what the deeper life is, what living abandoned to intimacy with God is.

Failing to Abandon to God { 199 }

In brief, it is akin to the theme of this book. God wants us be romantic with Him and nurture a passionate intimacy with Him. He wants us to love Him more than our most significant other on earth. We call it, *Abandoned to Intimacy with God*. Just as in marriage down here, we commit ourselves to care more for our spouse than ourselves. We vow to put their needs as our highest priority. To be sure, if God truly becomes your dearest lover, your spouse may actually get jealous of God.

Let's Fall in Love with God -- John Henry Alan

Jealousy will not occur, though, if both spouses have their highest affections for God. When that happens, you have the most beautiful companionship with your earthly mate. Your desires are both for the same love of God. As we come further into an intimate relationship with God, our hearts become more abandoned to His pleasure!

Allowing Distractions to Diminish Loving Desire {200 }

Everything in life is either an *attraction* to God or a *distraction* from God. Anything that keeps me from knowing God intimately is my enemy. Look for any distractions from thinking about God. (Intimacy with God causes you to think about Him as often as you think about your most significant other.) Any possession that comes between you and Him is an enemy. I do not believe in keys per se, but if there ever were a key to unlock the mystery of living abandoned to intimacy with God, it would be simply this. Allow God to be Himself and learn to love Him.

Not Stepping Out of the Box { 201 }

This may seem like a simple thing. But if it were, Christians would not need encouragement to press on to *intimacy with God*. Christians are infamous for trying to put God in a box. The God who fits in a box is not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The God who fits in a box (or church building) is the God who can be controlled by man and who is at the beck and call of man. But this is not the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible is an awesome and mighty force in this universe. When we persist in allowing God to be Himself, the most

Let's Fall in Love with God -- John Henry Alan

unconditionally loving being in the universe, that becomes within our inner being an explosion of reality regarding the person of Jesus Christ. Our understanding of Him goes beyond academics and into that marvelous world of personal intimacy. Perhaps the ultimate truth here is that when we allow God to be Himself, we then, and only then, discover who and what we are as men and women. We are then well on our way to living abandoned to intimacy with God.

Believing That God Is Unreliable { 202 }

The major problem with allowing God to be Himself and do what pleases Him is our misunderstanding of His motives and actions. Many have heard that God never changes. Then we see that God seems to be fickle. First He tells the Israelites not to take any loot, and kills those who do. Then He tells them to keep the loot. God seems to be extremely unpredictable. The reconciliation of these two impressions is this. God's character never changes. But His actions are often unpredictable. God is completely reliable!

Perfect Parenting

Often, God's actions *must* be different, in what seems to be the same scenario. It is the same manner in which we must change what we do for each child, in order to accommodate their very different personalities and tendencies. Imagine that God is parenting over seven billion of His kids simultaneously. And then imagine still that He magnificently architects all circumstances of all people to create divine appointments, intersections and so on in order to help each one live their most effective and

Let's Fall in Love with God -- John Henry Alan

most loving life.

This is one of only two dwelling places of God, in the Ark of the Covenant and in the Holy of Holies (our innermost being, the heart). Beware of those who would insist that you take particular care with your body so as not to defile it. Scripture is clear that it is what comes out of a man that defiles him and not what he takes in.

I am not suggesting that we waste our bodies in wanton pleasures of sin. Nor would I recommend that we get slovenly, lazy or obese. However, to misapply scripture in a physical manner as opposed to its intended spiritual application leads to defective doctrines and inaccurate definitions of what is sin and what is not. Even the “stripes of Jesus” by which we are healed is a reference to the healing of the soul rather than the body. Surely, Jesus miracles included many physical healings. But that in no way implies that the healing spoken of in Isaiah were of a physical nature. So, if you are a ‘name it and claim it’ adherent, don’t be disillusioned by a “No,” answer to a physical healing prayer.

I believe that we often miss out on the best revelations of the character, nature and enormous measure of God’s love by expecting physical or material blessings rather than “peace that surpasses understanding” of the soul in the midst of calamity and distressful situations. And “unconditional” love in the soul is that which emanates from the Holy Spirit’s presence in the soul. And joy instead of sadness is a healing in the soul which far exceeds the “gritting of the teeth of endurance” while experiencing misery in the soul.

Let’s Fall in Love with God -- John Henry Alan