

Let's Fall in Love with God
INTRODUCTION: Intimacy is the Journey
(John Henry Alan, edited by Bob Clarkson)

INTRODUCTION

This book by John Henry Alan has in its inspirational foundation selections from the writings of Graham Cooke, J. H. Alan, Brennan Manning, A. W. Tozer, Frank Laubach, Oswald Chambers, Jeanne Guyon, Francois Fenelon, Brother Lawrence and other men and women who were deeply intimate with God and whose ministries focused on helping others to develop a passionate love affair with God. The work is compiled by J. H. Alan and edited by Bob Clarkson.

A Personal Word from the Author

Although this book focuses on relationship with God, the same dynamics of good relationship apply to both the theist and the atheist. The same things that hinder us from developing a deeply affectionate relationship with God come between us and deeply affectionate feelings for others. Although few realize it, we are our own greatest obstacle to good relationships with other people. Since every relationship is a two person choice, I dramatically improve my chances of enlarging my circle of friends by always choosing affection for the other person even if we disagree on many points of fact or opinion. "The greater the measure of affection which I offer to others, the greater the measure of affection I will receive." -- J H Alan

So whether you are religious or not, I encourage you to look for the nuggets of relationship gold which will improve your sensations in life and experience of life as you read this book. I don't expect you to embrace every

truth expressed in this book, but I am confident that the time it takes you to read it from cover to cover will produce enough improvement in your understanding and acceptance of others to make the time spent worthwhile. And if you have given up on God, hopefully you will give him a second chance, as an intimate relationship with Him could enormously improve your experience of life.

As your emotions reach new heights of pleasure and you experience less anxiety worry and fear it will become easier and more intuitive for you to embrace those in your life who are the most difficult to accept. The best news is this. Your measure of personal peace and happiness can improve even if your circumstances and experiences do not. The key to all of this is choice, your choice. And it is less about the choices of your activities than it is the choices about what you believe. Let yourself believe different things and it will change how you feel.

You may prefer to use this book as a source of daily inspiration:

*My hope is that you find one or more insights about relationship
which will improve your life
and bring you much peace,
especially peace with yourself, peace with those around you and
with God.*

History

Maybe it is time for exploring the possibilities in our relationship with God. For most Christians the world around, there is a far less **intimate relationship** between themselves and God than what God has offered them.

Although, any human being can live a life quite successfully without being religious or even a theist, there is a much better way contained within the Holy Bible. The Bible is HIS story (history of God). It is an articulation of a God paradigm that, when fully understood, staggers the imagination. The history of the God who calls Himself "I AM", is rife with opportunity to live happy and fully contented lives. The story is laced with unconditional love for His created beings which is demonstrated by His unfailing grace toward them. His grace, which is the *undeserved* favor God has for us is the very proof that His love is perfect toward us. His love never ceases to flow to us. And His love, can and will transform us, if we will simply receive it and love Him in return.

Grace-FULL *not* Grac-IOUs

Unfortunately, grace may be one of the most ambiguous terms in the English language. However the definition of grace, when drawn from the Holy Bible, screams loudly that Divine Love generates a Divine Grace. Both of them are unconditional and unfailing. Grace is the essence of inexhaustible “second chances.” Grace is often considered the same thing as gracious.

However, a closer examination of these two terms will clearly indicate that they are *not* the same. So for the clarity not to be lost by contradiction, we will refer to God

in this book as ‘*grace full*’ and never as *gracious*. Other ambiguities of definition have prevented many from becoming deeply and passionately intimate with God! You will see these as you read further on.

Grace in Action

This great God is the epitome of relationship in every possible relational experience. That is, God is the best Father, Mother, Sister, Brother, Friend and Mate anyone could ever have. Jesus proclaimed in His preaching, that even though we look out for the best interests of our children, God is far better at parenting than we could ever be. He actually knows the motives of every human expression. And like the “best Dad ever”, His love never fails toward His children. His desire for them is that they become the best adults possible and reach their greatest potential. And His grace (**underserved favor**) toward His children never puts a limit on second chances. He will patiently pour everything He can into them.

The best definition of *grace* includes the fact that *grace* is a by-product of *love that will never cease to flow toward the object of that love*, that is favor for the undeserving. When love is present, it will always offer to help one up who is down. So, like a mother who sits in the courtroom with her erring child, even if her child deserved to be punished, pleads for the shortest possible sentence. So, God as both Father and Mother has every intention of

both helping the children become their best possible selves and of minimizing the emotional pain they must endure in life. The introduction of God Himself into the physical realm of man in the person of His Only Begotten Son, is the strongest evidence of God's desire for an up close and personal relationship with mankind.

No Untold Stories

God's written history, every story in the Bible, includes every kind of good and bad scenario possible in human experience. The whole story has been told, so that we could see that relationship is the most important thing to both God and His creation, mankind. When one looks closely at each story, the unfailing love of God can be seen and with it the enormity of grace both in size and frequency which God expresses to us, His children. If there is any meaning at all, in the story of Jesus, His birth, His life, His death, His resurrection and His return to the Father, it is this. "Greater love has no one than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend."

Forgiveness Is Not An Option

Punishment Is A Choice

The whole object of the Cross being the final event in Jesus' life, when He deserved the best end, was that God even made provision in Himself, to provide an innocent man who offered to take the penalty of another

man's criminality, (that is yours and mine), so that justice was served on behalf of the victims of our crimes while we ourselves were released from that punishment. [The ultimate irony of all time was that a violent offender, Barabbas, was set free at the same time and in the same pronouncement of judgment when a completely innocent man, Jesus of Nazareth, was condemned to death.] What enormous love God must have in order to watch His Son take the most inhumane of all punishments devised by human kind!

Freedom to Love God

The purpose of this book is not to convert anyone to Christianity. It is assumed that whoever reads this book is searching to know God in a deeply meaningful way. *The desire of the author is that Christians who seem to live in constant guilt, shame and fear will be able to surrender even those feelings to the God of the Cross.* After all, Jesus died, not only for the crimes themselves, but also for the guilt and shame associated with them. And in God's eyes, Jesus suffered enough of our shame so that we did not have to suffer either guilt or shame again. When we succumb to the temptation of Satan to wallow in either our guilt or shame, he silences us and robs us of the very love, joy and peace God offered to us through this most kind of all acts on our behalf.

Suffice it to say, all of the contributors to this

treatise strongly desire to set the reader free from both guilt and shame. The chapters which follow articulate clearly what it means to "live fully loved" by God and "enjoy His favor always". They will also reveal the misrepresentations and misinterpretations of key passages of scripture which have come between them and a joyous laughter, not only at themselves, but also those around them. God is the author of love, joy, peace and all other positive emotions and has created a way for every man, woman, and child to experience them in abundance.

Freedom to Unbelieve

There is FREEDOM just around the corner, hopefully by the time you finish reading the last chapter. But, be advised that this book will be as useless to you as pulp fiction, if you will not allow yourself to "rethink" truth. So far as we know, no one has been persuaded to leave their community of worship over the things expressed in this book. But many have experienced a much more joyful and peaceful life than before, and a much closer relationship to the object of their faith.

Find Yourself

We will include several resources for further reading which may expand on what we have shared here. We ask you to ponder how each story in the Bible may have *you* in it. We suggest that you cast yourself into every

part in each story to discover what God might want you to know about yourself. You see, your life will likely never be changed significantly by seeing others in the parables. But, if you use the stories as mirrors of your own tendencies and motives, you may make huge leaps in the direction of a better experience of life. Rather than hanging out the shingle, "This world is not my home," consider treating it as though it is and opening your current home to any and all who might be blessed by your love and hospitality.

Truth — Relative or Absolute

It is also very important to realize how much we order our lives by relative truth rather than God's truth. I resisted this thought largely for most of my life. But after a long flight and deep interrogation by a seat-mate, the conversation ended with this question to me, "It seems to me that you believe that there is such a thing as absolute truth and that you have found it." I had very little time to respond, certainly not enough time to discuss apologetics. I sought the Holy Spirit's guidance in what was about to come across my lips.

"Well, James, I do believe in absolute truth and that I have found it. So, James, if you believe that all truth is relative, answer this question. "If you could embrace a body of relative truth that leaves you twisted, frustrated, angry and generally miserable, or you could choose relative truth that made you happy, pleasant, peaceful and generous to everyone, which would you choose?" There

was no time for an answer, nor was one needed.

A few weeks later, I was awakened by the Spirit to these words from Him, "James was right." "About what?" I asked. To which He replied, "All of you have and embrace relative truth because most of what you believe came to you from your relatives and their inner circle of influence." As I have pondered this ever since, I realize time and again that whenever I abandoned a relative truth in favor of God's truth on that particular issue, my heart changed in a very positive way. After several years of doing this, I realized that I had adjusted over 400 perceptions (beliefs) about God, myself, and others. All of these have accrued to enormous benefit and relational intimacy with more people than I had ever imagined possible. They are all quite different. But each one adds richness to my experience of life.

So, "Be not afraid. You believe in God." Trust God to reveal His absolute truth to you when you approach Him with a loving heart and an open mind. God will help you discover the partial truths, half truths, or outright falsehoods of what very well-meaning people have taught you to believe. Just because someone else whom I trust believes something, does not make it true.

After a few years in this pursuit, God showed me that Jesus statement, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free." applied mostly to the truth about myself. As God revealed truth about me to me, and I was willing to accept it, I was released from the misbelief and

selfishness of those revelations. So, please approach this treatise with a loving heart and an open mind so that God can use it to help you find a deeper love for God, others and even yourself.

A Heart On Fire

We hope that you realize our dream for you and God's as well. We trust that your heart will become aflame with the message of this book. We also hope that you will read the other resources included later on and let each one reveal more of the love of God to you than you have ever felt. And to be sure, love is a feeling (which will always show itself in action).

Love Is A Feeling (the purest emotion)

Don't be fooled into thinking that love is action itself. Myriad atrocities against man have been committed in strong faith, but misguided faith. Also know that Jesus Christ would not have suffered the Cross out of duty or obligation. Jesus died because His love for me, His love for you, was so immense that He "... died for His friends." This love in action presents a quality of life that is far above anything that is natural. "Love always produces good works. However, good works do not produce love."