

Dynamic Creative Tensions in Living Loved

As we grow in Christ, we begin to *sense* the dynamic creative tension in *living loved*, perhaps even before we identify why.

The Christian faith is securely based on the *either/or* of the essentials of the faith. For instance, I was *either* lost and spiritually dead without Jesus' provision *or* not. I try to keep these essentials as *few as possible* and as *many as necessary*. Upon our secure foundation in Christ, God builds this *mystery of godliness* (1 Timothy 3:16, *NASB, ESV*) of *living loved*. As I discover and experience more of this eternal quality of life, I shift into the realm of the *Both/And* of dynamic, creative tensions inherent in *living loved* upon the certain foundation of the essentials of faith.

How could we expect anything different as we begin to see God and ourselves more accurately?

God is an infinitely perfect, all-knowing Being who always does His people good. His greatness generously pours out His goodness to create the human race made in His very image. We are as much like God as any living being could be. Yet also so different because we are created and now fallen since humanity went rogue in Genesis 3.

And the compatibility is as close as possible since Jesus, the second member of the Godhead could become man without violating either. Yet the difference is so great that humanity can never try to become little gods. Although because of pride (not seeing ourselves accurately), we keep trying by taking control of our lives like Eve then Adam, deceived to believe we can direct our life better than God.

*I hope you are beginning to feel these tensions because they are both **dynamic** and **creative** as we experience this new life of **living loved** in God-given freedom.*

God redeems and restores those who agree to embrace Jesus by faith as the Lord of their life. Yet we are still very much in-process on the way.

Immediately, God delivers His people by faith from the domain of the evil forces of darkness and transfers' us into relationship with His beloved Son (Colossians 1:13). Yet we live in the "*already but not yet*" of God's plan, still very much in process to shatter the illusion that we can ever walk out this life on our own.

Compared to God's perfect love and our anticipated relationship with Him in eternity, no matter how well-studied, no matter how clear a prophetic word seems now, we still only know in part (1 Corinthians 13:9-13).

No wonder we bump into questions that puzzle us.

I have a "*Deuteronomy 29:29 Bucket*" into which I temporarily throw these paradoxes (two truths that *seem* to contradict from our limited viewpoint). God has revealed lots through His Spirit, yet mystery still remains.

Why?

The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law (Deuteronomy 29:29).

I invite you to join me by looking over my shoulder and adding your perspective to my partial. The following *questions* and partial *answers* reflect my best sanctified reasoning from Scripture to explore these edges of Biblical revelation for how a follower of Jesus who is *living loved*.

I'm suggesting these as pointers on our way for a follower of Jesus who yearns to live in the tension of our "uncomfortable zone" of *living loved*. Where you may believe that I've elbowed beyond Scripture or failed to venture far enough, please come alongside. Make this interactive, at least in your sanctified reasoning, and also as you share your insights as a fellow journeyer in a comment below. With insight from others, I intend to move closer to accurately exploring the edges of this *mystery of godliness* together.

I will list a number of my *dynamic, creative tensions* in the form of questions. Feel free to come to your own answers. And add any other questions to the "comment" section below.

What kind of people does Jesus invite in?

Jesus identifies what a disciple looks like. Are you a bit surprised by the kind of people He invites in close as intimate allies?

When [His disciples] saw him, they **worshipped** him; but some **doubted** (Matthew 28:17 with 28:16 as the context, **emphasis**).

Everyone gets to participate with Him. God excludes no one who desires to come. He invites normal people just like you and me, still in-process with an inner longing to *worship* yet also with nagging *doubts*.

How does Jesus train up such people to be wholehearted followers of His?

To such people, much like us who long to worship even in the midst of doubt, Jesus gives *one* command in *Matthew 28:18-20* ("make disciples of all people groups"). His followers continue to be lifelong life-learners, learning about Jesus so we can better do life with Him. This clarifies our *commission* from our Commander-in-Chief for our lifelong God-Assignments. Jesus includes three dynamic pathways to express how we accomplish this DiscipleMaking.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

- ***Telling others about Jesus as we are on our way.*** By *going* through life with the intention to connect with people where each is. We then nudge each towards the Father's love to the degree they are open (John 20:21). Prioritize our relationships with our unbelieving acquaintances ("invest" in them) for the purpose of inviting these into *open*, interactive relationships to come to faith. "*Invest & invite.*"
- ***Connecting with other like-minded people in community.*** By *being immersed* (baptized) as God instantly initiates this union with the Father, Son and Spirit when our hearts connect through faith in Christ. Then this experience deepens over our lifetime as we cultivate enjoyment of His presence and those of His followers in faith-communities.
- ***Training up one another to partner with the Spirit.*** By *teaching* others to **do** what Jesus taught His disciples to know and do. Our learning is activated only through obedience. First and foremost through face-to-face training, Jesus modeled and taught His followers by *living loved* by His Father and passing it on to others.

Does this seem a bit overwhelming, beyond what you can do?

Great! You are beginning to tap into the dynamic creative tensions in *living loved*. None of an authentic Christian life can be done in our own strength and wisdom. Look how the "bookends"

of this *Great Commission* point to the unfailing Source of *living loved*, Jesus' delegated *authority* ("rule") and His intimate "with you" presence, both from Genesis 1:26-28.

"All **authority** in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go....And **surely I am with you always**, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:18+20, **emphasis**).

What do you see as your worth in God's eyes?

"The worth and excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its love"
(Henry Scougal).

Do you see yourself like God does, of unending worth and value because Jesus ransomed you with the highest purchase price possible, His very life?

We have two choices, only two. Is our Family-of-Three the Source of our desires and actions, that is, the "*object of our love*"? Or is it our own self-indulgent desires and the things of this world our aim in life, so we become choked off from life and unfruitful (Mark 4:18-19)? **Only two** choices. God designed us to be all-in, 100% for Him. And we only become fruitful when we abide as His willing branches exclusively in the true Vine, Jesus.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

God designed us with core-needs for *intimacy* and *adventure* that require more than we have in ourselves alone. Fear of failure is a faith destroyer. As intimate allies, our great **King** ("*authority*") and our good **Father** ("*with you always*") prepare His people together as His son and daughter, His prince and princess.

He uses trials and tough times and failures in ways only He could imagine to draw us closer to His heart. The Spirit then activates the treasures in Christ to outfit us and calls His people to take our rightful place as co-regents with Him over this world. This very process often brings confusion. So, bring our bewilderment to our loving Father. He loves you beyond our ability to fully grasp and is the only Source from which a life of *living loved* can flow.

*These fabulous word-pictures of **Kingdom** and **Family** stir our hearts.*

When we add to this the NT clarity of Jesus as the generous **Groom** ravished by love and friendship for His people as His bride, our heart becomes unhinged! This picture of lasting **friendship** (John 15:12-17) is so intimate that Scripture waited until the coming of Jesus to clearly reveal such a marital relationship (Ephesians 5:32; Revelation 19:7). Our time on earth, from one perspective, is the process of the Spirit preparing Jesus' bride.

Have you ever felt God's spiritual desire for such a friendship with you that surpasses friendship in the best marriage you have seen?

Please don't settle until you do at times. The true Christian life has answers for the routine and mundane in life and also for those times we seem to be flying with eagle's wings. Read the Psalms. Read the Gospels, especially John, describing the intimacy of Jesus with His Father.

"I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you" (Jesus in John 14:20).

Please stop and read that again.

Did you catch the amazing intimacy Jesus uses to describe our relationship with Him?

I see this as the eternal reason for the creation of human life and the world He delegated to His people to steward. God's heart yearns to enjoy intimate *relationship* with His image-bearers to release a life of *living loved*. He provides *everything* needed and invites us into His circle of life

and love to enjoy His presence. God delights to partner with each of us in His purposeful *adventures*. Both our *identity* and *authority*. Stunning, yet this was His Eden-intent, even though God knew Adam would fail.

Is love the one necessary response for the Christian life?

Certainly not! Paul states *love* as the greatest of the cluster of *faith*, *love* and *hope* that he often repeats. However, the NT joins these three together in an indivisible, seamless unity (for instance, 1 Corinthians 13:13; James 2:18-22; Colossians 1:5; Galatians 5:5-6). I have been around Christians who focus on one and diminish the others. At times, I've been one myself! The very moment we separate *faith*, *love* or *hope*, though, we end up with a spiritual corpse (James 2:26).

With *love* and *faith* without *hope*, we tend to start fast, but lack staying power, easily discouraged or frightened, not finishing well. The eager expectation of God breaking in is missing so we develop limited perseverance.

With *love* and *hope* without *faith*, we chase after the newest fads, rushing from one spiritual outbreak to another or from conference to conference. We often chase after emotional hype and call it "spirituality." We have little basis for discernment without a strong, robust, *faith*-based value system stemming from a broad and deepening understanding of Scripture. We settle for what is emotionally satisfying.

With *faith* and *hope* without *love*, we possess solid theology of the past (OT) and future (end times). Yet with a harsh, attacking edge with too little present expression of sensitivity, care and kindness. We don't see bloated, religious eggheads like the Pharisees *living loved*. So-called *faith* truncated from *living loved* is dead (James 2:26).

Yes, such a life is powerful, otherworldly, impacting, because the indivisible unity of *faith*, *hope* and *living loved* is Christ-like.

- *Love* pushes out apathy and self-referenced living.
- *Faith* pushes out regret, guilt and shame.
- *Hope* pushes out fear, anger, idleness and settling for less.

Why is the possibility of failed love part of creation?

Authentic love must be freely given. God designed us to *willingly* give Him our love in the sweet surrender of two lovers who truly trust one another. God did not design robots or puppets or clones. We bear His image with the ability to *freely* love Him. And if the opportunity to willingly and freely receive and give back love exists, the possibility of *rejecting* that love must also exist for love to be authentic. We've all felt the painful personal results of those who reject God's love, some even under the guise of Christianity.

*Think through God's lens. God was willing to risk the great pain of rejection because the upside of love with **you** and **me** was so great! Think deeply on such a heroic love (1 John 3:1).*

Eve, then Adam, chose *in*dependence and went rogue in Genesis 3. They foolishly chose to reject God's extraordinary love. Their allegiance shifted to follow God's archenemy, Satan, instead of the most wonderful *Family* in the universe. Eve then Adam futilely attempted to fill their legitimate, God-given needs in their own ways and all creation fell. Such control and *in*dependence from pride is called sin. Yet God had a plan, Jesus, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

And when Jesus came to restore relationship, He did not come alone!

The Father, Son and Spirit all worked with His people as a divine Partnership-of-Three (Acts 10:37-38; Mark 1:9-11). Jesus' life on earth gives us a Model for how to *live loved* by the Father. Jesus' life and death, resurrection and ascension make it possible to *live loved* by bringing God's plan to fulfillment. Jesus determined with certainty through His death, resurrection and ascension that God's plan is **already** successfully completed. Do we trust God's provision implicitly, even though we do **not yet** experience all the finality as we walk this out by *living loved* on earth?

Jesus came once for all time as the "*Last Adam*" to fully meet all God's requirements to deal with sin (the **already**). He will come again to consummate all things (the **not yet**). Some call this the "**already but not yet**" of God's plan. Others prefer the phrase "*time between the times*."¹

These phrases point towards the daily responsibility of God's people, modeled by Jesus, the "*Second Man*." As God's intimate allies, we make visible in part in and through our lives what is *already* true as we await Jesus' Second Coming.

Jesus also came as "*Second Man*," the first completely whole and healthy human since Adam's fall in Genesis 3. No wonder Jesus models for us a life of *living loved*, loved by the Father, Son and Spirit and passing on love to others.

Without the first, we can have no relationship with the Father. We are dead and lost. However, without embracing the second, Jesus as Model Man, we have no flesh & blood picture of what this life on earth looks like. Yes, our life forever with God in eternity is secure through the death of Jesus, the "*Last Adam*." Without the second though, Jesus as "*Second Man*," we have no sure spiritual compass pointing to true north to guide us through life to live loved. Embrace both!

What central response did Jesus say demonstrates that we are His Disciples (John 13:35)?

"A new command I give you: Love one another. **As I have loved you, so you must love one another**" (Jesus in John 13:34, **emphasis**).

"***As I...so you***," the model for life! God never veers from His original Eden-intent, despite the horrific Fall in Genesis 3. Jesus values His Bride so much that He freely, willingly, and joyfully paid such a steep price to restore intimate relationship with us so we could now live in a *culture of freedom, living loved*. The cost of the death of His Son, Jesus, surpasses the sum of all ransoms paid from the beginning of the world to rescue and restore a kidnapped family member.²

How vast is God's love for you?

One measure of the value of any object is its purchase price. The God who knows everything was acutely aware of the coming defection of mankind, even before creating. What "return on investment" (*ROI*) could be great enough for God to pay such an immense price to ransom humanity?

Jesus *joyfully* paid this price for **you** and for **me** because He anticipated the results, bringing many daughters and sons into the **Family** of God (***Hebrews 12:2; 2:10***). This immeasurably high cost of Jesus' death restores us to participate in God's eternal Eden-plan. Look at the cross. Jesus' death defines *how very much* the Father loves **you**! This is our true North.

¹ That is, the *time* between Jesus' 1st Coming and His 2nd Coming in power to restore all things. This *time between the times* is where we live and minister now, drawing from His complete provision provided in His 1st Coming and yearning for its fulfillment in His 2nd Coming.

² If any of this is remotely strange or unclear, I would recommend the first book in my Trilogy called *Big God! Bold Design*. In the first book (*God's Initiating Love*), chapters one through three explore Genesis 1, 2 and 3. With a good handle on these three chapters, we now have a good lens through which to understand the rest of the Bible.

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! (1 John 3:1a).

The Father created us to *live loved by Him*.

Transformation begins when we see the Father's love through Jesus' eyes and value ourselves in the same way our *Family-of-Three* value us. "*We become what we behold*" (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). They delighted to design us as God's image-bearers and to restore us like Jesus, unique in all His creation. As new creations, our lavish Giver calls us to fulfill our destiny. Through us, He has now multiplied channels for His life and love and light by *living loved*.

As we freely receive, also willingly give Jesus' life away to free captives and train them up one-by-one on His daring adventure. *Living loved* means that *we* are a causeway to channel God's love toward others. The rescued become the rescuers. Out of His free, boundless and energetic love, God found His pleasure in creating us lovable, like Jesus. It's who He is. He acts. He blesses. He initiates to reproduce because it's His nature. Repeatedly recalibrate your spiritual compass to God's eternal plan.

If God is so powerful and loves us so much, why doesn't He take away the tough trials in our lives?

Trials and suffering are apparently part of God's good plan for us since the Fall in Genesis 3. God *anticipated* the Fall yet did nothing to cause it. We must first begin to accurately see the type of world that Jesus calls us into by *living loved*. "*We are not of this world yet called into the world to minister to it,*" (John 17:16+18), neither isolated from it nor following its lead.

Unless we gain an accurate view of the world Jesus sends us into, we will struggle. Jesus tells us we will have trouble in the world (John 16:33). No wonder Paul tells God's people not to get entangled with the world-system (2 Timothy 2:4). We are Christ's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20) with our citizenship in heaven, not on earth (Philippians 3:20). As His royal priesthood, we are passing through this world (1 Peter 2:9+2:11). time to note how the NT describes this world-system that He has sent us into (John 15:18-25+16:1; Luke 8:14; 1 John 2:15-17; 1 John 3:1; James 4:4; Romans 12:2)?

When things seem to be out of control around us, that's the way the world-system is since Genesis 3. ***Don't put this on God.***

God has made preparation to protect His people in tough times and use them in order to knit our hearts closer to His. It's like if we go hiking in the mountains. It's exhausting with the high altitude and heavier exercise than most of are used to. But it develops us. And if some emergency comes up that the team handles well, bonding is tighter than ever before.

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it (1 Corinthians 10:13).

All this leads to spiritual growth, creating within us more *resilience* to rebound when the world slams us down and *buoyancy* when the world floods us with its Tsunamis. Now we have the resources to *bounce well*. In this process, we both draw closer to God and come out the other side *living loved*. Jesus warned His disciples of what to expect. The *Both/And* of His discipline of His dynamic creative tensions.

"I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away" (John 16:1, ESV).

How do I embrace this new life and live loved?

When I came to Christ as an adult, those around me in my country church modeled a high value of engaging the Word. From early-on, significant time in the Bible became a spiritual strength to change me from the inside out. However, don't feel like you need to be where your pastor or your favorite internet speaker are in your grasp of Scripture. The key to LifeChange is **doing** what you see in God's Love-Letter.

Begin where you are now, without guilt or shame, condemnation or regret. The death of Jesus on the cross paid for **all** our sins, along with the accompaniments of guilt and shame, condemnation and judgment. Where you now are is the only place from which change can ever occur.

Yet without learning first-hand what God's Love-Letter reveals, how can our life ever be characterized by living loved in a way God wishes?

In this season, how much engagement in God's Word do you feel you need?

How are you doing meeting this desire?

Are you blown away with God's plan for you? Or feeling overwhelmed?

What could hinder you from experiencing this abundance from our design?

Three broad categories. Unbelieving heart. Unconfessed sin. Unforgiving spirit.

We have a lifetime to explore the depth of what Jesus gifted us at that point of salvation when our hearts joined together. Continually pursue. Take "*ant steps*" in the right direction. **Do** His Word *Partner* with the Spirit and keep making incremental progress on your journey. Trust. Chillax in Him!

What is such a life of living loved worth to you?

"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells everything that he has, and buys that field.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold everything that he had and bought it"
(Matthew 13:44-46).

Jesus already gave His all to us and simply calls us to respond by giving our all to Him!

Next Steps

1. Print out this free **PDF of this website**, mark it up and make it your own.
2. Move on to the next cascading web page, ***Flood our Life with Spiritual Nutrient*** to further develop your solid, weighty foundation through responding in obedience to what the Spirit enlightens in the articles there.