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# A Contextual Consideration of Genesis 9:27

John T. Stevenson

*May God enlarge Japheth,  
And let him dwell in the tents of Shem;  
And let Canaan be his servant (Genesis 9:27).*

This verse has been the subject of some varied translation, interpretation, and speculation. Is it a historical anomaly? Or, as I will suggest, does it have Messianic implications that will set the stage for the rest of the Pentateuch? An examination that gives attention both to the immediate context as well as to the literary context of the book of Genesis will be in order.

This portion of the narrative begins following the flood and the establishment of the covenant with Noah and his family and the rest of creation. Then the story takes a seeming unexpected turn with Noah's drunkenness and subsequent nakedness.

*Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard. <sup>21</sup> And he drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent. (Genesis 9:20-21).*

Though drunkenness is condemned later in the Scripture (Ephesians 5:18, Isaiah 5:22; 28:7-8; Romans 13:13; 1 Corinthians 5:11); there is no work of condemnation given in this instance of Noah's actions. The narrator simply tells the events in a step-by-step order as Noah...

- Begins farming
- Plants a vineyard
- Drinks of the wine
- Becomes drunk
- Uncovers himself inside his tent

The first several of these actions seem innocuous. Even when we arrive at the description of Noah becoming drunk, the Hebrew term used here to depict this state of drunkenness is the same as is found in Genesis 43:34 where the brothers of Joseph enjoy his hospitality and "they feasted and *drank freely* with him." We do not normally read of the actions of these brothers at Joseph's table as a wrong-doing. They merely drink and enjoy the meal he has provided for

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them.

In the same way, the account here in Genesis 9 simply tells the facts of Noah's drunkenness to explain how he came to be in the situation of being naked within his tent. Indeed, it is in the fact of this nakedness that the reader is reminded of how Adam and Eve had been naked in the garden. Sin had brought shame to their nakedness and now there will be indications that Noah's nakedness will also carry with it an element of shame, even though it is in the privacy of his own tent.

*And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. <sup>23</sup> But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness. (Genesis 9:22-23).*

The actions of Ham versus those of his brothers are to be seen in contrast to one another. Ham's actions are two-fold: He sees the nakedness of his father and he tells his two brothers who are outside the tent. This presupposes that Ham had entered the tent, though the entry is not specifically mentioned and therefore does not come under the scrutiny of the passage. By contrast, his two brothers move to cover the nakedness of their father, but do so in such a way that their faces are averted and they avoid looking upon their father's nakedness.

Ham	Shem and Japheth
Entered the tent	Entered the tent
Saw the nakedness of his father	Avoided looking at the nakedness of their father
Told his brothers about the nakedness, thus exposing it	Put a garment over their father, covering his nakedness

The actions of Ham in this narrative have been interpreted in a variety of ways, some of these reflecting more of the imagination of the various interpreters than anything in either the passage or its context. Thus Bergsma and Hahn see this as involving an illicit union between Ham and Noah's wife, but no evidence, real or imagined, substantiates such an outlandish claim.

Other interpreters have seen the language depicting the actions of Ham as a euphemistic description of homosexual incest and/or rape. Robertson takes this position, pointing out those times under the Law where to see a person's nakedness or to uncover nakedness were expressions of sexual activity (1998:179). Leviticus 20:17 is singled out as an example of such language when

it forbids a man from seeing the nakedness of his sister in a context which lists a number of sexual transgressions.. Davidson points out that “the expression ra’a’ erwat, ‘to see the nakedness of,’ by itself never denotes sexual intercourse elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible” (2007:143). It must be admitted that it is this very context that is missing here in Genesis 9. The nakedness that was seen earlier at the fall in Genesis 3 had no hint of a sexual component other than the fact that naked exposure in and of itself had come to be seen as shameful. The reaction of Adam and Eve had been to attempt to fashion a covering of fig leaves which were eventually replaced by coats of skin. The narrative here in Genesis 9 follows a similar pattern of describing nakedness followed by the action that would cover that nakedness.

Adam and Eve	Noah
They eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil	He drinks of the fruit of the vine
Their eyes were opened so that they saw they were naked	He became drunk and uncovered himself
The nakedness was confessed by Adam and questioned by God	The nakedness was reported by Ham to his two brothers
They made coats of skin to try to cover their nakedness	Two of his sons went backward into a tent with a garment to cover Noah’s nakedness
God made for them coats of skin	

Just as Adam had been ashamed at his own nakedness, the actions of Noah’s other two sons speak to the same issue of shame as they take care not to allow their eyes to even see the nakedness of their father, holding a garment and walking backward with gaze averted as they move to cover their father's nakedness.

*But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness. (Genesis 9:23).*

In contrast with Ham who looked upon the nakedness of his father and then exposed that nakedness to his brothers by relating an account of that nakedness to them, Shem and Japheth go to great pains to avert their eyes even from a casual glance at the naked condition of their father. Their actions make it clear that the issue was in seeing rather than some other physical action. Davidson summarizes:

“The narrator draws a dramatic contrast between the filial irreverence on the part of Ham and the extreme care to preserve the modesty and respect for their father on the part of the other two sons (2007:143).

As Noah awakes from his inebriated condition, he becomes aware both of his situation as well as the actions of his various sons. This brings about a prophecy that will be the focus of the remainder of our study:

*When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him. 25 So he said,  
 “Cursed be Canaan;  
 A servant of servants  
 He shall be to his brothers.”*  
 26 *He also said,  
 “Blessed be the LORD,  
 The God of Shem;  
 And let Canaan be his servant.  
 27 May God enlarge Japheth,  
 And let him dwell in the tents of Shem;  
 And let Canaan be his servant.” (Genesis 9:24-27).*

We have already noted some of the similarities between this account of Noah with Genesis 3 where Adam and Eve become aware of their own nakedness. We can further develop those similarities as well as the contrasts that are made between the two accounts.

Adam and Eve	Noah
Placed into a Garden	Plants a garden
They eat the fruit of the tree	Drinks of the fruit of the vine
Results in recognizing their nakedness	Results in lying naked in his tent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in a curse</li> <li>• Results in a lasting division of the seed</li> <li>• Followed by a genealogy to demonstrate the division</li> </ul>	
Their eyes were opened and they knew they were naked.	He awoke from his wine and knew what his younger son had done.
They were judged and cursed by God.	He placed a curse upon Canaan.

From our New Testament perspective, we cannot fail to miss the echo of these events as they are heard in the gospel accounts of the betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion of Jesus. Following the actions of the upper room where He and His disciples ate and drank from the fruit of the vine, Jesus was betrayed and arrested in a garden and then condemned to hang on a cross in shameful nakedness so that He could bear the shame of our curse upon His own body.

The prophecy now related by Noah comes in three parts, dealing with each of the three sons of Noah. On the one hand, there is a cosmological significance to this prophecy, since all mankind is descended from these three men. On the other hand, it should be remembered that this prophecy had a special meaning to the original recipients of the book of Genesis. The Israelites in the wilderness will soon be given the directive to enter the promised land and destroy all of the Canaanite inhabitants who are there. This curse is a part of the reason for that destruction.

Just as Noah's youngest son (Ham) had committed the sin, so now Ham's youngest son (Canaan) is cursed. This brings us to a question. Why is Canaan cursed instead of Ham? We are not told. One suggestion is that Noah would not curse Ham because he had been blessed by God (Genesis 9:1) and you don't curse someone whom God has blessed.

Another possible reason for the curse coming upon Canaan is that as the infraction of Ham involved bringing dishonor upon his father, so the curse of Canaan would be the punishment bestowed on his father. Robertson summarizes this position: "Ham would experience a judgment corresponding to his own sin. He would have to endure the same kind of rebelliousness against himself that he had expressed against his father" (1998:181). It should be noted that the Canaanite race was noted for its moral decadence.

- Sex worship.
- Bestiality.
- Child sacrifice.
- Homosexuality.

Thus, the judgment would not be upon an "innocent" people merely on the basis of the sin of a past ancestor. Instead, the words of Noah become a prophecy that foretells what kind of people will come from the descendants of Canaan. The Israelites need to know this because they will be given the mission of entering the land of Canaan and bringing God's judgment against that people. It should be noted that the descendants of Canaan went on to show the highest level of sinfulness and this curse would not take effect until that sinfulness reached its zenith (Genesis 15:16).

The intensity of the curse that is placed upon the descendants of Canaan is expressed in typical Hebrew repetition:

*A servant of servants*

*He shall be to his brothers.*

This sort of repetition is familiar to the reader of the Bible. The Holy of Holies refers to the most holy place. The Song of Songs is a fitting epithet for a great song. In the garden, Adam had been warned that if he ate from the forbidden tree, he would surely die; the Hebrew text literally says, “Dying you will die,” but this is merely a Hebraic way of intensifying the certainty of the promise (“Your death really will take place”).

The force of the intensification here in Genesis 9 is to show, not only the certainty of the promised servitude, but the intensity with which it will be effected. From our perspective, we can look back and see the intensity with which this curse was carried out in the conquest of the land of Canaan in the days of Joshua. That Israel’s conquest of the land was the fulfillment of this curse is seen in the next verse.

*Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem;  
And let Canaan be his servant (9:26).*

The curse against Canaan was set against the backdrop of a blessing that is extended, not to Shem, but to the Lord. Canaan is cursed while God is blessed. Yet the Lord is here identified as “the God of Shem.” This is not a denial of God’s sovereignty over all men, but rather a statement that it will be those from Shem who will recognize that sovereignty and who will become worshipers of Yahweh. This promise will be passed down to Abraham, the descendant of Shem and it will be through this Semitic line that the nation of Israel will be descended. In the same way that Yahweh is the subject of the first line of verse 26 where He is blessed, so also it can be argued that He continues to be the subject receiving the servitude expressed in the second line. As God is blessed in the first line, so we read that Canaan will be the servant of God in the second line. This is not to deny the intermediary role that the descendants of Shem will have in this process, but the primary focus of this prophecy is a contrast between Canaan versus God. This becomes of vital importance as we come to verse 27.

*May God enlarge Japheth,  
And let him dwell in the tents of Shem;  
And let Canaan be his servant. (Genesis 9:27).*

There is a play on words off the name "Japheth" (יָפֶֿתֿ). His name is repeated in the phrase that has been translated “enlarge” as this blessing calls for God to enlarge (רָחַֿב) Japheth.

*May God YAPHETH Japheth...*

Scholars have shown no absence of suggestions as to how such an



enlarging might have been fulfilled in the descendants of Japheth and a number of possibilities have been proposed:

- A physical enlargement has been seen as the descendants of Japheth have been the rulers of some of the greatest empires of the world.
- A mental enlargement has been suggested as it is maintained that Japheth has produced great philosophers and scientists.
- A spiritual enlargement is claimed throughout most of church history as the world of Japheth is said to be largely the world of Christendom. The Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant churches have been the legacy of the descendants of Japheth.

However compelling each of these suggestions might seem to be, none of them constitutes an appeal to the context of Genesis and all are therefore suspect. In dealing with this word play, Sarna points out that “the rendering, “enlarge” for the Hebrew *yafit*, although traditional, is uncertain. The stem *p-t-h* means ‘to be open,’ and nowhere else does it have the sense of enlargement of territorial boundaries. The phrase may simply be figurative of prosperity” (1989:67). If Sarna is correct as we are to see this as a reference to the descendants of Japheth enjoying prosperity, then we can perhaps see a further elaboration of this promise when God speaks to Abraham in Genesis 12.

Promise to Japheth:  
“God will enlarge  
(prosper) him.”



Promise to Abram: "In  
you all of the families of  
the earth shall be blessed."

The parallel promise in Genesis 12 speaks of the blessing that would come though the descendant of Abraham. This blessing is quoted by Paul in Galatians 3:8 where he says that “the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached to gospel beforehand to Abraham.” It is therefore suggested that the prophecy of Noah was also an example of God preaching the gospel beforehand. This brings us to the central concern of our study as we ask the question as to who the pronoun refers in the middle of verse 27.

*May God enlarge Japheth,  
And let HIM dwell in the tents of Shem;  
And let Canaan be his servant. (Genesis 9:27).*

Most modern interpreters think that this is Japheth dwelling in the tents of Shem. The New International Version goes so far as to translate this to say that Japheth will live in the tents of Shem. In doing so, it does its readers a disservice by giving an interpretive translation in contrast to one that is grammatically accurate:

KJV	NASB	NIV
God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem	May God enlarge Japheth, And let him dwell in the tents of Shem.	May God extend Japheth's territory; may Japheth live in the tents of Shem

There is another possibility. In keeping with the more correct translations of both the KJV and the NASB, we can understand this verse to be saying that it is God Himself who shall dwell in the tents of Shem. Goodspeed points out that such an understanding sees this verse as “a repetition of the promise of the former verse, only in a more detailed form. Jehovah is to be not only the God of Shem, but is to dwell in his tents” (1896:382).

The Hebrew text is properly rendered by the KJV and the NASB in simply giving a pronominal suffix. The subject of the sentence is God and it is not outside the realm of grammatical possibility that it is God who continues to be indicated by this suffix. Gunkel points out that this phrase “is an intentionally secretive expression, as appropriate for the oracle, and cannot, as usually interpreted, refer to friendly relations with Shem (this would be perhaps יָנַח ‘may he sojourn like a guest,’ or שָׁכַן would have a modifying “in peace,” “together,” or the like; cf. Psa 133:1)” (1997:82). He takes the view that it is Japheth who dwells in the tents of Shem and that this means Japheth drives Shem from his territory, but he admits that this view does not conform to the immediate context and therefore retreats to his presupposition that this passage is the result of a combined tradition of two different authors who provide no intelligible continuity to the passage.

By contrast, viewing this passage as a promise that God will dwell in the tents of Shem fits both the immediate context, the context throughout the rest of the book of Genesis, as well as a canonical context within the entire Pentateuch. In the immediate context, we see that God promises prosperity to Japheth, but he goes even further in the case of Shem as He promises to dwell in the very tents of Shem. Within the context of Genesis, this passage can be seen as reflecting the culmination of a creation/re-creation theme that runs through the entire first half of the book.

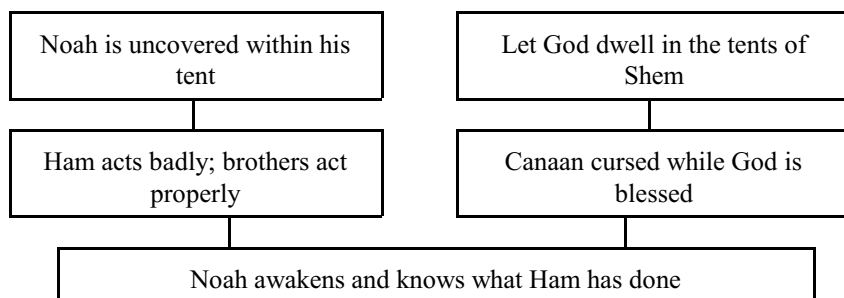
Genesis 3:15	Genesis 9:23-27
A curse is pronounced by God	A curse is pronounced by Noah
The eyes of Adam and Eve were opened	Noah awoke from his wine
They realized they were naked	He realized what had taken place while he was naked

They are subsequently removed from the garden and from the presence of God	The presence of God is promised to one day dwell in the tents of Shem
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In spite of the curses that take place, in both cases, there is also a promise of blessing that will involve God winning a victory as He comes to be with His people. Dimant points out that Dead Sea Scroll 4Q252 speaks of how "God blessed the sons of Noah, and in tents of Shem he will dwell" (2013:121). This scroll comments on our passage and paraphrases it. She goes on to note that "by placing the 'tents of Shem' before the verb, the reverse order of the Masoretic Text, and by omitting the biblical reference to Japheth, the 'tents of Shem' acquires a unique significance. Additionally, as noted, the verb יִשְׁכֵּן, 'to dwell' is applied to God and not to Japheth (2013:124). This interpretation is not unique to this particular scroll. It is also supported by the Book of Jubilees, one of the books of the Pseudepigrapha where we read: *God shall enlarge Japheth, and God shall dwell in the dwelling of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant* (Jubilees 7:12). Targum Onkelos subscribes to the same interpretation when it renders its paraphrase of this passage to read:

The Lord shall enlarge Yapheth,  
And he shall make his Shekinah to dwell in the tabernacles of Shem  
(1862:54).

The narrative starts with a tent as Noah becomes drunk with wine and things take place within his tent. It comes to a close with the promise of how the God of Shem will reside in the tents of Shem. This beginning and ending underscores the importance of the tent to the narrative.



Even though Kline takes the passage to as a promise that it is Japheth (instead of God) who will dwell in the tents of Shem, he points out the weakness of this interpretation when he admits that "the basic fallacy in all such views is their attempt to relate the curses and blessings of Genesis 9:25-27 to events in general history and to relationships and developments within the common grace

sphere (2006:269).

His own view is that we should instead look for a redemptive and covenantal application of the prophecy of Noah. Assuming the interpretation that in is Japheth who will dwell in the tents of Shem, Kline sees both Japheth and Shem as entering “into the covenant which would have been almost exclusively confined to the line of Shem in the days of the old covenant” (2006:268). But we must ask whether the descendants of Japheth really had any special connection to that covenant that was not also had by other members of the human race. On the other hand, Kline is correct to note the double reference in this passage to a tent. The story revolves around what took place in the tent of Noah, but it ends with a promise of how the God of Shem will reside in the tents of Shem.

The tents of Shem is evidently a reference, not merely to all of the descendants of Shem, but to the particular line and family of Abraham. It is a reference to the nation of Israel. It is therefore all the more striking how the Psalmist, in describing the plague of the firstborn in Egypt, makes reference to the tents of Ham.

*He leveled a path for His anger;  
He did not spare their soul from death,  
But gave over their life to the plague,  
51 And smote all the firstborn in Egypt,  
The first issue of their virility in the tents of Ham. (Psalm 78:50-51).*

This reference to the “tents of Ham” is a poetic way of speaking of the people of Egypt. In the same way, the “tents of Shem” is a reference to the children of Israel. Yet the poetic language that calls for God to “dwell in the tents of Shem” will admit to a very literal fulfillment. The larger context of the Pentateuch allows us to see how this prophecy had fulfillment in the establishment of the tabernacle as the place of residence of God’s glory cloud. Indeed, the same verb שָׁכַן, ‘to dwell,’ is used in Exodus 25:8 when God says, “Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell (שָׁכַן) among them.” The tabernacle in the wilderness was centered in the middle of the Israelite camp, located among the “tents of Shem.”

This is the point of Noah’s prophecy. Yahweh will dwell with His creation. Mankind which had been removed from the presence of God in the Garden of Eden would find that same God coming to dwell in their midst and in their tents. But the prophecy is even more specific. Yahweh will dwell with a specific people group. He will dwell in the tents of Shem. This will lead us to the Abraham narrative in which God comes to the descendant of Shem and enters into covenant with him. The God of Shem will then be seen to also be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

This is also a Messianic prophecy. John 1:14 tells us that God tabernacled with us, taking upon Himself a Jewish “tent.” He who was from the beginning and who was without beginning became flesh. He came to His own and

dwelt among them. Going to the cross, he became naked for us. He did so in order to cover our own spiritual nakedness. We are made partakers of his death through faith and this is symbolized by the eating of bread and drinking of the fruit of the vine as we observe the Lord's supper.

Noah's Prophecy	OT Fulfillment	NT Fulfillment
God shall dwell in the tents of Shem	The presence of God came into the camp of Israel	God took on flesh and dwelt among the Jewish people

In fulfillment of Noah's prophecy, Jesus not only took on flesh, but also was born into a Jewish family and lived among the Jewish people. The body into which he was born was a Jewish body. Forever He shall dwell in the Tent of Shem.

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# Behind the Marriage Wall

Michelle D. Woodstock

Marriage is one of the greatest things in human life. It allows a man and a woman to come together, sharing everything, and support each other throughout life. Marriage is more than two people living together. Marriage provides permanent stability, as the two people form, not only an economic unit, but a social force against the harsh realities of the world. Marriage can be both a refuge and a strengthening force, as two people share both the joys and the hardships of life. Most importantly, marriage is the foundation of the family, the proper way in which children are brought into the world. A good marriage provides healthy role models for young children.

According to a new Pew Research analysis, less than half of all adults in the United States are married, with those between the ages of 18-29 maintaining the lowest rates at only 20%. On the other hand, cohabitation has increased dramatically over the past 20 years, giving rise to a new family structure. Since 1990, the number of adults in cohabiting relationships has nearly doubled with 6.2 million households currently headed by partners in unmarried relationships. But while nearly four out of ten Americans believe the institution of marriage is out-dated, the majority (61%) have expressed a wish to do so one day. While researchers conclude that factors such as the Great Recession and recent economic hardships have affected the number of Americans pursuing traditional marriages, marriages are still happening, although in the long-term rather than short-term. Whether it's for the purpose of saving money by living together or pushing the age of marriage into later years, the majority of Americans will eventually marry. The order and timeline by which they do it, however, is re-shaping modern society's definition of relationship and family during this process. All of this being said: it should also be noted that about half of all marriages fail.

This high divorce rate is the product of getting married for the wrong reasons and there are many reasons why people enter into marriage wrongly. Some people are simply lonely, and they will marry the first person who seems like a suitable match. Rather than waiting for the right partner, marrying in haste can lead to a multitude of bad choices that ends in divorce. Or, as my grandmother would say: "Marry in haste, brings repent in leisure." Others get married because they feel pressured to do so. They are pressured to "do the right thing," especially when a woman becomes pregnant outside of wedlock. More often, sexual attraction seems to form the basis for a relationship, but does not form the basis of a strong relationship, or for that matter a strong marriage. Especially when two people are faced with marriage

and children, the strains become too much. A third reason that couples divorce is that one or both partners are unwilling to sacrifice some portion of their independence. Many husbands and wives maintain separate checking accounts, dividing up bills, groceries, etc. as if they were roommates. Many people are unwilling to give up other aspects of single life, such as the husband who still remains involved in sports to an excessive degree, or cannot give up his “night out with the boys.” Marriage should be the total joining of two people, or else it will fail. According to Pew Analysis, the fact that the 2010 U.S. census estimated that half of all marriages will end in divorce should trigger a serious reaction from society. In light of this there is becoming a big need for counselling, with the options for counselling in marriage ranging from individual, couples or family therapy for support from a biblical perspective to a secular view. According to Burns some key elements essential for building, preserving, and maintaining lasting marriages involves the biblical view of each party and an understanding of societies changing views on marriage.

Every relationship has to be built on a foundation. Whether we mimic our parents, role models, or follow societies norm, somehow we create our own design for forming lasting relationships with others. Marriage in particular has had its share of individuals struggling to find out what it will take to form a long lasting relationship in the marriage. Some couples spend many years trying to figure out what will allow them to have love, longevity, and quality within their marriage, while others just give up and give in to the failed attempts to make it work. Several years ago there was a couple who were having marital issues and each party just did not see things in the same way no matter how hard they tried. There was a constant block as if there was a wall between them that hindered communication, compassion, and affection. The husband decided to leave after many years. Leaving a wife wondering what she did so wrong to be in such a place. This couple, like so many others struggled to find what will work for them, but failed. This story continues with the couple separating and a family pulled apart and living separate lives out of the will of God. After a period of actively seeking God in their circumstance, this couple in this marriage can tell you that the key elements that were revealed during this time and was found to be essential for building and preserving a lasting marriage depended on their biblical view of marriage.

The couple questioned where is God in all this? But the bigger questions were: What kind of relationship did the husband and the wife have with God? Was God an everyday part of their life? Did they have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? Love and relationships are a central theme in the Bible, beginning in Genesis and ending in Revelation. God designed us for a relationship with Him. The whole of Scripture speaks of our relationship with Him. Scripture tells us how to have it, how to hold onto it, how to rest in it, how to communicate it, and how to enjoy it. The fact is God wants to be a



part of our everyday life, including being a vital part of our relationships. God loves you and wants a relationship with you, an intimate relationship. In the book of Genesis, when Adam and Eve rebelled, man was separated from God through sin. God's holiness required punishment and payment for sin, which was eternal death. Our death is not sufficient to cover the payment for sin. Only a perfect, spotless sacrifice, offered in just the right way, can pay for our sin. Jesus, the perfect one, came to offer the pure, complete and everlasting sacrifice to remove and make the eternal payment for sin, because God loves us and desires an intimate relationship with us. You may ask why salvation is so important in the subject of marriage. There are many things in life that we would categorize as important such as family, friends, education, jobs, home, health, and the basic necessities of life such as food and clothing. But there is something that is even more important than all of these. Mark 8:36-37 tells us "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? This tells us we have something more valuable than all the riches in this world, including the world itself. Your soul is what has value. The soul is the real you. The soul can be lost, but losing one's soul is like losing the whole world in God's eyes. The Bible shows us that the soul needs to be saved and saving of the soul is done through obtaining salvation which intern gives a relationship with Jesus Christ. When you have an intimate relationship with Christ, your view of marriage will line up with God's view of marriage, which is the right view of marriage.

Have you ever heard the phrase "every Christian has an enemy? Likewise, every marriage has an enemy and every marriage is subject attack. The enemy although unseen by the natural eye, is an adversary that is not an imaginary character. Satan, the Devil, is a real person and spirit being with intelligence, real characteristics, with a goal and an ambition to "steal, kill, and destroy" (John 10:10). It is important that we recognize when our marriages is being attacked by the one who does not wish for it to be successful. Make no mistake, he is the real enemy, not your husband or your wife. Ephesians 6:12 tells us "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." According to God's word we have the ability to not only recognize the work of the enemy, but we also have the will to defeat him through the power of our relationship with God. The good news is that, although the Devil is described "like" a "roaring lion," (as noted in 1 Peter 5:8) in reality his "bark is bigger than his bite" he has no actual authority over believers. Satan is a liar and deceiver and uses deception as his weapon to gain advantage over those who are ignorant of the limitations of his power. When Jesus gave his life on the cross as the sacrifice for the sins of the world, He also redeemed us from Satan's power and dominion over us. According to Colossians 2:15 which tells us "Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them,

triumphing over them in it” and in 1 John 3:8 it tells us “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” So we see that Satan is already a defeated enemy by the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. You might ask, if Satan is already defeated, why is he still able to cause trouble in people lives and marriages. Because we do not use the authority that Christ has given us to put Satan in his place. The worse thing that we can do is leave doors open for him to work. The Bible tells us in Ephesians 4:27 not to “give place” for the Devil. Leave no area of your life where Satan can become comfortable enough to establish a stronghold. The only way to actually resist Satan is to submit yourself fully and totally to God.

Another key element in maintaining a strong marriage is prayer. On the day you and your spouse were married, you became one in the eyes of God. From that moment, the process of becoming one in your everyday lives continues throughout your marriage. This unity just doesn't happen, it takes time and effort. The most difficult thing about a marriage is that there are two people in it who are very different from each other. If this was a single effort it would be so much easier, because you can do what you desire for just you, but in a marriage you have to mesh your dreams, desires, attitudes, expectations, needs and habits with those of your spouse. One way of demonstrating this is praying together. When you pray with your spouse, you are drawn into unity with God, as a result, with each other. Just as physical intimacy affirms your oneness, so does praying together. When you pray as a couple, you are not only communicating with God, but also with each other. You can learn so much about one another by sharing prayer requests and listening to each other pray. For a marriage to last and be happy and fulfilling, three parties need to be involved: the husband, the wife, and the Lord. All marriages have problems because they are made up of two imperfect people. But if you add the presence of a perfect God, then you have unlimited possibilities for drawing closer to what God intended for marriage. Whether that happens is determined by how frequently and how fervently God is invited into your relationship. The more you pray together, the more you will see God do great things. I know that praying together works because I have seen its power demonstrated in my own marriage. Over the years my husband and I have struggled with many different issues, and at times I have felt that all hope was lost. Yet in those moments of despair, God intervened and He changed our hearts or even one of our heart and taught us how to make our marriage whole. A husband and wife cannot change each other. But God can change both of them if they invite Him to do so. No matter what struggle a couple face, if they keep praying together, they can see things turn around in their marriage. Instead of worrying pray. Matthew 6:34 says “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

A successful marriage also requires faith in God. Faith in God is more than a belief in Him, it's also to trust Him, to have confidence in Him,

and to be willing to act on this belief in Him. It requires action. A shared faith in God can bind married couples together in a commitment to common values. It can give them strength to overcome obstacles that might otherwise damage their relationship. Faith in Christ can help married couples strengthen their relationship with one another by helping them become more Christ like in their treatment of each other. They become more loving, helpful, gentle, patient, and willing to listen to one another. Each party by practicing faith in Christ can become more humble and willing to repent and follow God's teachings. The more willing each spouse is to repent and become like the Savior, the more harmonious the marriage will be. Married couples can work together to increase their faith in the Savior by obeying the laws and ordinances of the gospel. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight (Proverbs 3:5-6). The goal is to keep your faith in God strong as you grow in your marriage relationship, this means looking beyond the temporary, believing in your marriage as you believe in the plans that God has in store for you and your spouse.

I believe the best answers to some of life's most important questions are found in God's Word, which is full of wisdom and insight and that surpasses time and culture. Understanding what God says about marriage and the covenant promise you made to Him through your marriage vows is important. The covenant of marriage is based on the covenant God has made with us. It is with that same power of God's promise to mankind that our personal covenant of marriage can be kept so that marriage will be held up against the forces that would destroy them. It is a holy covenant between a man and a woman and their God for a lifetime. God designed Marriage between one man for one woman as we read in Genesis 2:18 "The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Genesis 2: 21-24 describes how God illustrates this covenant, "So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept. Then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. And the Lord God formed into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man and brought her to the man. And the man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife and they shall become one flesh." Then in Matthew 19:4-6 Jesus reinforced the idea that marriage is a covenant relationship when the Pharisees tried to trap Him with the question of whether or not it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife for "any cause at all". Jesus answered "haven't you read," He replied, "that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female. They are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together let no man separate." Genesis 2:23-24 confirms this when it is said "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall become united and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh".

A marriage based on God's word is one that is in balance and has Christ as the head of the man and the wife together. It shows the concept of marriage as an oneness between two individuals that portrays the oneness of Christ with His church. We know that applying biblical principles to marriage will give us a stronger foundation than those who do not. In the book *Creating an Intimate Marriage*, Burns states that God designed marriage to provide: partnership, spiritual intimacy and the ability to pursue God not to "finding a soul mate", someone who will complete us. The problem is looking to another human to complete us, the bible refers to this as idolatry. God wants his people to find their fulfillment and purpose in Him and not in our spouse, it's unrealistic to think that any person can live up to such an expectations.

As we digest all this information on God's view and expectation of marriage, it is disappointing to see how much change has taken place in the institute of marriage. One example of this is as I did this research on marriage and as I searched for books and literature on the subject of marriage, I constantly came across material on gay and lesbian lifestyle that was grouped with marriage materials. Though this is a whole other subject of its own, it has found its way in the sanctity of marriage. Other materials that you will find grouped with marriage materials is Cohabitation, couples living together that is not married. It is clear that in current society marriage has been redefined. Marriage has also been brought down to a sheer form of contract which has basically altered its nature and purpose. The most devastating part of all this is threats on the liberty of individuals and organizations that uphold marriage and have moral or religious objections to its redefinition. No matter how much society tries to redefine marriage, the family is and will always remain the building block of our society, and marriage is and will always be at the heart of the family.

I close with a little known fact from an article from Inspiration Ministry written several years ago that changed my whole perspective on marriage. It is called the 100%/0% rule. After driving around with divorce papers in my car for a year partially completed and seeking God's guidance and will during this time, He led me to this little known fact. What is the 100%/0% rule? It is simply taking 100% ownership and responsibility of your actions thoughts and deeds in your marriage, expecting 0% (nothing) in return. You do all that you are supposed to, regardless of the fact that the other person may not reciprocate. I can see heads turning, what? Is she crazy? Some may even be saying, you know marriage is a two-way street. Let me explain. The Lord said to me, in the midst of your broken marriage, in the midst of your pain and turmoil; take your eyes off your spouse and focus on Me. But God how can I do that when my husband is the problem. Then God said I am dealing with you right now and this is what I want you to do. I want you to focus Me. I want you to walk with me so closely that you see what I see, I want you hear what I hear, and I want you do what I do. God said I want you to take 100% responsibility of your action in the marriage and accept the fact

that I want you to expect nothing from your spouse. When I accepted all this, I began to feel as if a gigantic load lifted off me. I was not trying to figure out what to do anymore with my marriage; I left everything totally in God's hands. My desire for divorce ceased. It was no longer about what I wanted, but it became all about what God wanted for me. Everything that felt dead in the marriage gained life and the outlook become very different. Until you surrender all to Him, there will be no reconciliation within.

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# The Effects of Grief And a Biblical Response to Recovery

Jo Ann Gilmore

We have been taught not to grieve. This is evidenced by the excused short time frame that people are given from their normal work schedule. The truth about grief and mourning is that “it never really ends; only as time goes on we do our work, it may erupt less frequently” states Alan Wolfelt in *The Truth about Grief* by Konigsberg (2011). Grieving is a process. It made its way into the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders III (DSM III) in 1980 in an entry for “Uncomplicated Bereavement” which was defined as a normal reaction to the death of a loved one. Because we have attachments to people and things no one goes through life without loss and grief. When there is a loss we shift into numbness. This is a natural process but if left unattended too long a person can slip into a state of depression. In working through this process, some people go through acute stages of grief frequently referred to as complicated grief. As of 2014 in the DSM IV, the person grieving their loved one is allowed two months of sadness, insomnia and loss of appetite before their process is classified as complicated grief.

Complicated grief is an acute state that impedes functioning for longer than six months. It is characterized by intense yearning for the deceased with distressing and intrusive thoughts about the death of the loved one. It exists on the margins where normal grief revolves around the center, erratic but reasonably predictable. Then there is traumatic grief which is often used interchangeably with complicated grief, prolonged grief or complex grief. Complicated grief occurs in people who have prolonged difficulties in adjusting to their loss and is considered an abnormal response. It is technically defined as an acute state that impedes functioning for longer than six months and is characterized by intense yearning for the deceased and distressing and intrusive thoughts about his or her death. Mongelluzzo (2013) quoting Joanna May tells us that the suppression of grief and despair numbs our psyche and soul and drains the energy we need for resilience. Resilience in bereavement is reaching an acceptable adjustment to someone’s death with in a relative short period of time thus; people whose self-esteem is intact have greater resilience. Resilient grievers also appear better equipped to accept death and have a better worldview.

In 1964, Colin Murray Parkes analyzed the medical records of forty four widows and found a sharp rise in the number of psychiatric complaints in the

first six months followed by a return to a level similar to his control group of non-widowed women that he deemed were consonant with the traditional picture of grief as a severe but self-limiting affecting disorder. In 2003, a longitudinal national study was conducted where researchers compared large groups of widowed women to married women and found that recently widowed women have more mental health problems than do married women. Prolonged grief disorder occurs and is the biggest predictor of it being dependent on the deceased for a sense of role in life or identity.

### **Problems, Controversies and Solutions**

Everyone does not grieve the same way so it is difficult to put parameters on how or long a person should grieve. The time and severity of one's grieving period is determined on the relationship to the deceased. Wolfelt (2011) contends that problems such as depression, anxiety, bad relationships and general malaise might be due to what he calls "hidden grief" or "carried grief" from a past loss that was driven underground but remains as a toxic attitude. These problems sometimes occur because our society rushes grief or ignores it all together.

When grief first made its appearance in the DSM III it was relegated to the back of the book to a section that doesn't qualify as full-fledged mental disorder such as malingering or senility. These conditions are known as "V" codes and get little attention because their treatment is not reimbursable by insurance. Psychiatrist and practitioners can fudge by diagnosing major depression if a person still has significant distress stemming from bereavement but they must already have the medical diagnosis of depression. In the 1980s the question came about of "do men and women grieve differently and if there is a difference, whose worked best?" In the 1990s, Doka, a former Lutheran minister turned thanatologist divided grievers into two types: those with an instrumental style or those having an intuitive style. The Instrumental style group responded in intellectual or action oriented ways while those of the intuitive style group were the ones who experienced grief with more outward emotional expression. His aim was to represent the masculine experience of grief because men will seldom participate in such surveys. The truth is that the female response is healthier yet there is not a definitive answer as to whether men and women grieve differently; everybody grieves. Children also grieve and there are factors that influence how well a child copes with grief. Some of these factors are age, stage of development, relationship to the deceased to name a few. Research indicates that the younger the bereaved the more problems they will have coping. However they are more resilient. How does one heal grief? Grief is deeply spiritual. It is not that time heals all wounds the answer is more to the fact that in time the trauma of the event goes away.



“We do not see things as they are; we see them as we are”. The Talmud

In the book, *Awakening From Grief*, Welshons (2003) has many suggestions of solutions to dealing with grief. This first one is probably what most people do and that is to cry. I personally met a lady who told me that she cried for three solid days when her husband passed. That put me in the mind of a fast because she said that she did absolutely nothing else. I guess that works for many but what if you cannot cry? That might be a hard idea to fathom but I am a victim of not being able to cry and that really hurts a lot; it feels like a howling that needs to come out. I am sure that one day it will. This inability probably has to do with the tragedy involved with his untimely passing. Undoubtedly, there is someone somewhere else with the same issue. We all grieve but we do not all grieve the same.

He also suggests that the griever tell their story in some type of bereavement group, find safe and appropriate outlets for your anger that is if you are angry. Here in lies one fallacy of the five stages as presented by Kubler-Ross. My personal experience has been that not all people go through a stage of anger at least I have not. If a person is angry then they should acknowledge it, let it go and find forgiveness. Let go of guilt, which I imagine most people can think of something, which if they knew it would be over so soon, would be done differently. Last but not least he tells the reader to take care of their own physical and mental health. The griever should incorporate meditation, contemplation or prayer. He should take become more mindful of his physical health as some people go into such deep mourning that they leave off their own physical health. Become creative in your new lifestyle. For some this could mean a makeover, deep introspect and/or serious decluttering of the home and the mind, likewise. The griever must learn to laugh, breathe, relax, have fun and not be in a hurry.

It has been established that grief is spiritual and having that in mind the question is “what then is spirituality?” ORRELL (2003) tells us that spirituality is survival! For the griever the survival instinct sees the preexisting condition of grief as life’s next menacing threat. The purpose of spirituality is that it redefines the meaning of adaptation. It is an adaptation strategy. There are basic ground rules for successful spirituality which are: know what you already believe and why it is not working. To do this successfully one must visit the dark dungeons inside of self.

It is at this juncture that I interject the spirituality of grief. Grief can take a person into a very dark and low place. In the Holy Scriptures, 1 Samuel 31: 3-6, we see that when David, the King of Israel heard that King Saul and his sons were dead he was grieved. And since he understood the things of God it

was clear to him that Saul was anointed, called and placed as king of Israel by God it was not good that any man should do harm to him. David avenged God of His enemy in killing the one who said that he killed Saul thus David did what was right in the sight of God somewhat alleviating his grief. Grievers can overcome by obeying the word of God. Hebrews 13:5 assures the believer that Jesus will never leave us nor forsake us so in the darkest times of life the believer can be assured that the Heavenly Father is right there with them. God with us not like a physical person but God with us is better than a physical person. The sufferings and grief of Job proves that if while suffering in the dark place of grief, if the griever continues to believe in God and maintain their integrity that grief will not overtake them. God is faithful. It is because of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. His mercies are new every morning.

### **The Five Stages of Grief**

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross defines five stages of grief. She believes and teaches that a griever must go through these five stages in this particular order: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance as the process to in overcoming their grief. As it has been afore stated everyone grieves differently and not everyone goes through all of these stages neither in this particular order.

Stageism has made damaging inroads into the behavioral sciences. According to Toni Bisconti, then at the University of Akron in Ohio, stage theories are conducive to self-fulfilling prophecies and confirmation biases. An example is that if I lose my partner or spouse and I am angry on a given day then I will think I am in the anger stage and discount the fact that also on that day I might be sad, distraught or even happy at a given moment. Stage theory prioritizes negative emotions over any positive ones that might occur over a happy memory of the deceased.

Since the time that she introduced these five stages other counselors and psychologists have presented newer and more updated approaches to overcoming grief. One such contributor to the stage theory arena is Therese Rando who proposed the six Rs. These are to recognize death, react emotionally, recollect and re-experience, relinquish, readjust and reinvest. Then we have Robert Kavanaugh a counselor who outlined seven phases. These are shock, disorganization, volatile emotions, guilt, loss and loneliness, relief and reestablishment. From my viewpoint, Robert Kavanaugh's ideals are more realistic and would seem to apply to a greater population. I take this view as it applies personally to me. Kavanaugh's Seven Phases appears to present a more complete cycle of realization, acceptance and recovery. Below is a chart of the three views on grief which allows the reader to see all three aspects and consider each of them.

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross' Five Stages of Grief	Therese Rando's Six R's of Grief	Robert Kavanaugh's Seven Phases of Grief
Denial	Recognize death	Shock
Anger	React emotionally	Disorganization
Bargaining	Recollect and re-experience	Volatile emotions
Depression	Relinquish	Guilt
Acceptance	Readjust	Loss and loneliness
	Reinvest	Relief
		Reestablishment

Orrell (2003) in *The Truth About Grief*, presents that the grieving process includes another critical stage which is the search for meaning. The purpose of meaning is that it plays a critical role in recovery. If a griever is following the Kubler-Ross model then as they move on to acceptance, it is because they have found some meaning for their suffering that allows them to accept it and go on. Death is a traumatic event. Scientists have found a connection between most trauma which includes grieving and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The commonality here is that all of these victims are on a search for meaning. They ask "why me?" then blame themselves. This is called self-blame. The value of self-blame in the process of recovering from trauma according to Dr. Melvin Learner, a crime psychologist at the University of Waterloo, says that people believe they live in a "Just World" and will do almost anything to protect that belief. The self-blame strategy dealing with trauma helps to make a griever a better person. The search for meaning begins with a rigorous moral inventory yet this writer tells us that the grieving process is big business, is self-perpetuating and ineffective.

### **Consolations of Grief**

Mongelluzzo presents eight theories or consolations about the grief process. These are The Phase of Stage Model of Grief also known as the Five-Stage Model of Grief by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross which we previously visited. Then there is The Evolutionary Theories – Natural Selection Considerations by J. Bowlby. He suggests that due to the psychologically devastating reaction to the loss and separation from a loved one, the pain acts as a motivator to secure reunion with another or with others in their family or community. Bowlby believed that the point of grief is that of seeking reunion and moving on in order to preserve the species.

We move on to The Medical Model of Grief where grief is viewed as being similar to an illness or sickness. It is believed that grief is something to be

treated. Then, The Grief Work Model's main point is that enormous effort is necessary to "make real" the fact of loss in itself. What this means is that if you do not do your grief there will be a price to pay later. The Stress and Crisis Model of Grief focuses on grief as a stress and crises.

The Attachment Theory Model of Grief is credited to the psychoanalyst John Bowlby. His research was done with children and their parents. He recorded reactions of children and parents being separated from each other. When applied to bereavement and death, the attachment theory says that we grieve when we have lost an attachment and which was developed in order to survive. Therefore, when an attachment is lost so are we. I add that some other researchers found that people react to being separated from a significant figure in their lives. The thought to be determined is to whether their parents were supportive and available or narcissistic and indifferent and the bearing it has on grief. These researchers concluded that securely attached people were less angry, less socially isolated and less prone to guilt, despair and rumination which in itself is thought to perpetuate depressed moods that insecurely attached people.

The Freudian and Psychoanalytic Model of Grief is the model where pain is seen as being repressed. Last but not least is The Psychosocial Transition Theory of Grief in which the roles, skills, identities and relationships that were a part of you, your loved one or both are called to action toward change. Mongelluzzo mentions that symptoms of grief can be divided into the categories of what is felt, what is thought, what is done and what is experienced physiologically and psychologically.

### **Counseling**

The word counseling suggests that a person has a problem; more appropriately in association with grief a better term for counselor would be facilitator or specialist. Grief counseling came about 1976 by the hand of Vanderlyn Pine a former funeral home director turned sociology professor. Although, there are some professionals who publicly state that there is no need for grief counseling. Dr. Sally Satel, William Worden and Chris Fewdtnr of the Penn Center for Bioethics to name a few state that healthy people, people who are strong and resilient will get better on their own. Grief counseling is intended to help one problem, only and as such it is considered a preventive measure. It is hard to verify the effectiveness of grief counseling. Time has proven that traditional psychotherapy where people seek help; for a variety of conditions has been proven to work. In order for grief counseling to be successful in a quantifiable way it should either speed up normal grief or help people avoid complications such as long-term clinical depression or intense, prolonged suffering.

In 2008, Robert Neimeyer, a psychology professor at the University of Memphis and his colleague Joseph Cuarier analyzed the results of over sixty controlled studies on grief intervention and found no consistent pattern of an overall preventive effect. Instead these results proved that whether a person received counseling or not was not a determining factor as to whether a person got better over time the person just got better. They examined guided imagery, cognitive behavioral counseling, one to one counseling, peer groups, psychological debriefing and supportive phone calls. The only instance where counseling was measurable successfully in the collective was when it was targeted at people who were having prolonged difficulties. This group has what is called complicated grief which is considered an abnormal response. Thus, the conclusion is that grief counseling is most effective for those who suffer with prolonged/complicated grief.

Sue and Sue (1999) reminds counselors and therapists that in order to be successful as a family therapist, one must first identify their own set of beliefs and values regarding appropriate roles and communication patterns within a family. Sue and Sue (1999) also tells us that the Worldview of the culturally different is ultimately linked to the historical and current experiences of racism and oppression. A culturally different client is likely to approach counseling and therapy with a great deal of healthy suspicion as to the therapists' conscious and unconscious motives in a multicultural context. For a number of reasons mental health therapy has been taboo.

So why has there been a tendency for African Americans to avoid counseling? It has never been the standard or an option for African Americans to see a therapist for any reason and if one did it was through total secrecy. In addition to this there are other reasons why this cultural group is reluctant to therapy. Very few people if any outside of doctors, clergy and teachers were trusted so therapy was not the norm in the African American community. And, in the past, for the majority it has never been economically feasible. We must also acknowledge that because of the lasting effects of slavery and racism African Americans have valid trust issues and some even feel contempt for people outside of their community. The thought is that there is no way that people who do not live the same lifestyle or have the same stresses can relate to their feelings or anything that they may be going through. Many people in the African American community view oppression and injustice as an everyday way of life which makes the lack of trust for those outside of their culture a valid issue.

Today, more than ever African Americans by way of the church are encouraged to seek professional counseling yet there is still a shroud of distrust for counselors or therapist of a different race. The contention is that

people of another race cannot understand or honestly relate to the plight of the Africa American. The United States constitutes less than 5% of the world's population. On the basis of a sampler of less than 5% of the world, theories and principles are developed that are mistakenly assumed to apply to human beings in general and universally. All cultures are different but many nations of the world have accepted the five stage of grief pattern as the model to enable grief recovery.

### Biblical Counseling

In the book, *Learning To Walk in the Dark*, Barbara Brown Taylor presents the idea that grieverers are taking a walk in the dark as it relates to the blackness of night without the brightness of the moon; pitch dark. The dark emotions are grief, fear and despair. When a Christian who is grieving is told to move from these emotions and have a problem moving on they are usually told that they do not have faith in God. They are told that if they have faith that they can banish the dark angels and replace them with the angels of belief, trust and praise. In the book *Healing Through The Dark Emotions*, Miriam Greenspan calls this spiritual bypassing in other words, using religion to dodge the dark emotions instead of letting it lead you to embrace those dark angels as the most demanding spiritual teachers you know. She states that when a griever cannot tolerate the dark they use the artificial light of shopping, alcohol, shallow sex, drugs, excessive television or excessive time in front of the computer. I must admit that there was a point in time where I was guilty of spending an excessive amount of time both in front of the computer and shopping. But by the grace of God none of the old man vices kicked in. Apostle Paul told us that the old man with his deeds must die; that we have to put it off and walk in the newness of life. Yet, some believers if only for a little while, still fall into the trap of Satan when they grieve.

“One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light  
but by making the darkness conscious.” -- Carl Jung

There is also this idea of the “**Just World**” which states that you reap what you sow. This belief has an enormous influence on human spirituality and faith in a loving God. It is closely connected to ideas of fairness, predictability and trust. Christian faith is to offer believers a new way to translate their hardships. Jesus said blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom and again He said blessed are they who mourn for they shall be comforted. Ken Wilber is called an integral thinker who has been influence by Eastern philosophy and also understands how religious faith works. In a book called “One Taste” he makes a distinction between two important functions of religion. The first function he calls “translation” which offers people a new way of translating the world around them so that their lives take on more

meaning such as with the beatitudes. In the beatitudes, poverty and grief are moved from the loss side of the ledger to the gain side enabling those who are grieving to know that they can overcome. This is the function of religion, that is, to strengthen self; here in lies hope. Another function of religion is transformation which exists to dismantle self: those who find their lives shall lose it and those who lose their lives for my sake shall find it.

### **Conclusion**

With every loss comes grief. Grief is with us throughout our lives yet we have been taught not to grieve. When there is the loss of a close loved one or even other types of traumatic events, for some the grieving process can be an experience which can lead to a downward path of distress and depression. We see through the research that a person who already has mental health issues, low self-esteem or suffers from depression are not resilient and sometimes fall into acute or complicated grief.

The healing of grief begins when a griever allows the heart to be open and vulnerable and allow the wounds to be healed. True healing takes place when the griever opens his heart to absorb the darkness into the infinite light that is within. Each loss, each place of emptiness, each episode of grief can be healed through the passage of time but most importantly through God's infinite grace. Pastoral counselors help get griever's out of caves; spiritual directors help griever's go farther in. The way out is the way in. God is in the cave.

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# The Correlation between Mental Health and Religion

John Flanary Jr.

Rick Warren is the well-known author of the “Purpose Driven Life.” His youngest son Matthew passed away after committing suicide in 2013.<sup>1</sup> This comes as a result of his son suffering from mental illness over a period of time. Unfortunately, many people from a church perspective would claim that Matthew did not have enough faith or that he did not pray and read the Bible enough. This kind of assumption is not only ignorant but also dangerous but nevertheless it is a common pattern of thinking in the church. However, experts say more than 90 percent of people who die by suicide have a mental disorder while most people with mental illness do not die this way. Matthew Warren is not the only sufferer to experience that impulse or to act on it. He is one of about 38,000 in the U.S. to die by suicide each year, and thousands more attempt to do so, imagine it, or live out a number of other frightening symptoms of mental illness.<sup>2</sup>

This has prompted me to research how common mental illness is amongst the religious and if there is a correlation between the two. As I spent time working at a mental health facility, I had noticed that most of the clients who had mental health symptoms (especially those who were having delusions and/or hallucinations) tended to come from a religious background creating my interest. Therefore the research will look to define what mental health is and the symptoms associated with it, as well as if religion has an impact. Also, what does the Bible have to say in regards to mental health if at all? The research will also take a look into what the benefits or consequences are of someone with mental health who also happens to be religious.

Merriam dictionary defines a mental disorder as a mental or bodily condition marked primarily by sufficient disorganization of personality, mind, and emotions to seriously impair the normal psychological functioning of the individual—called also mental illness.<sup>3</sup> People with mental illness sometimes behave in ways other people don't understand and can't make sense of. People with severe depression sometimes stay in bed all day, unable to manage the most basic motivation to move. People with anxiety disorders can be gripped

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<sup>1</sup> (Christians Can't Ignore the Uncomfortable Reality of Mental Illness 2013)

<sup>2</sup> (Christians Can't Ignore the Uncomfortable Reality of Mental Illness 2013)

<sup>3</sup> (Merriam Webster 2015)

by irrational or even unidentifiable fears that don't incapacitate other people. Those affected by psychotic disorders may see things that aren't real, hear voices that don't exist, and sometimes lose the ability to discern reality at all.<sup>4</sup> As a result of this, people in general tend to distance themselves in hopes that that person would just pray or be more faithful which does nothing more than separate the individual from the body of Christ. There are also those who ignore these people in hopes that somebody else will step up and help them. Fear creates distance between those with and those without mental illness; sometimes we shame them into silence telling them that if they would just go get help and once they've done so to come back.<sup>5</sup>

How does mental illness affect those who are religious versus those who are not? A study was conducted in Korea in regards to the effects of religion as it pertains to mental health but not just those who are Christians but also of other religions. To assist in the investigation they used the DSM IV also known as the diagnostic statistical manual of mental disorders fourth edition mental disorders. The research that was conducted covered an arrangement of beliefs including those who claimed not to have any affiliation at all with a particular type of religion, commonly referred to as an atheist. The study consisted of 6,275 people across South Korea in 2001 with an age range of 18 to 64 years of age. Also taken into consideration was age(s) and sexual orientation analyzing the correlation between mental illness and the spiritual principles as well as type of religious affiliation associated.<sup>6</sup>

During this investigation a current mental disorder was defined as the occurrence of an episode that met the diagnostic criteria of any mental disorder during the preceding 12 months. Next, there were two main questions that were used: "What is your major religion and most of your life?" and "How much have spiritual values played an important role in your life?" During this study it was determined that amongst Catholics rather than in those who didn't believe, a single episode of major depressive disorder was higher.<sup>7</sup>

The prevalence of an anxiety disorder over the life time of a person who was Protestant or Catholic was higher than in the nonbeliever. Although surprisingly enough there was no significant difference between the type(s) of religion and prevalence of mental illness, Protestants had higher ORs (odd ratios) for lifetime anxiety disorder and lower ORs for lifetime and pass prevalence of single episodes of a major depressive order but not for one year prevalence.<sup>8</sup> Next, the study evaluated how spiritual values can have an impact

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<sup>4</sup> (Christians Can't Ignore the Uncomfortable Reality of Mental Illness 2013)

<sup>5</sup> (Christians Can't Ignore the Uncomfortable Reality of Mental Illness 2013)

<sup>6</sup> (Jong-Ik Park 2012)

<sup>7</sup> (Jong-Ik Park 2012)

<sup>8</sup> (Jong-Ik Park 2012)

on mental health, such as those who place a higher value in spiritual principles, and how they are linked to higher odds of suffering from current depression.

With that being said, there were two important associations that had come about as a result of the study between mental disorders and spirituality. First, there was a higher prevalence of current depression when attached with a high importance to spiritual values. On the other hand there was a less current alcohol use disorder when importance was placed on spiritual values. The study did not confirm any link between spirituality, religion and pass mental disorders nor did it show a relationship in regards to anxiety disorders in spiritual values.<sup>9</sup>

A more unfortunate and at times dangerous aspect of mental health is schizophrenia, as it relates to delusions in regards to those who do not have the ability to establish what is true or false. This type of disorder can cause a person to experience hallucinations that can be either visual or auditory and the individual can be either religious or not. A person who has this type of disorder can think that they are the devil or in some case believe that they are God, amongst other things. Depending on the country of origin, there was an impact on the percentage of religious delusions that one might experience in regards to schizophrenia. Studies performed on inpatients with schizophrenia in Europe compared to others countries showed a rate of 21% of religious delusions in Germany versus 7% in Japan [33] and 21% in Austria versus 6% in Pakistan [34]. A rate of 36% of religious delusions was observed among inpatients with schizophrenia in the USA[28].<sup>10</sup>

Looking to what the Bible says in regards to this topic can be difficult, since it does not give much interpretation into this type of issue as it relates to this disorder. Although one could make the argument that some of God's greatest characters in the Bible could have suffered from mental illness as in Numbers11:10-15 when Moses becomes overwhelmed in regards to the stress of having to care for God's people he asks that the Lord kill him, in the secular world this would be known as suicide ideation. Another example that we see is in 1Kings 19:1-4 where the prophet Elijah asks for God to take his life in a time of stress. Although in both cases God does not kill them but instead provides direction that they do not have to live alone but instead trust God and rely on other believers. It is also important to remember that we are finite beings and that we were born in to sickness, although physically alive we were

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<sup>9</sup> (Jong-Ik Park 2012)

<sup>10</sup> (Sylvia Mohr 2004)

spiritually dead thus susceptible to this fallen world. Therefore, even though we might be new creations in Jesus we still can become sick.<sup>11</sup>

There is one thing the Bible does speak to and that is demon possession. At first glance this can seem extreme, especially to the non-believer. Even the evil spirits recognized Jesus as God. Demon possession is the Greek word according to Strong's Concordance is *daimonizomai* which has a few definitions as in being possessed or under the influence of an evil power/demon. In the Thayer's Greek Lexicon it defines this as persons to who have been afflicted with illness, ranging but not limited to insanity, paralysis, and blindness.<sup>12</sup> It was not uncommon to witness Jesus casting out demons in the Bible while at other times having to rebuke one of his disciples for having an evil spirit upon him, such as Peter. This is to say that it could and would not be uncommon for one to have a spirit or evil influence over them, although not in control. Just as if a person were to become intoxicated from alcohol, it would not be suggested that the alcohol controlled this person but instead the individual would be considered under the influence of alcohol.

When talking about possession it can seem disturbing or unrealistic to the nonbeliever and even more so to us westerner(s), who if traveling to Africa witnessing possession of the spirit first hand. Often feeling bothered by these phenomena finding it difficult to understand, this is a result of the spiritual world not always seeming to fit the secular mold, assuming that those who are possessed could possibly be suffering from a mental illness, despite the lack of consensus amongst psychiatrist.<sup>13</sup>

There is a protestant subculture of 7% that presented with a high prominence of religiousness believing that demons were the cause of their mental illness. 82% of highly religious types who have psychotic disorders say that they believed in the influence of evil spirits while two thirds stated seeking assistance through prayer for deliverance or exorcism (the expulsion of an evil spirit from a person).<sup>14</sup>

Is there danger in being religious and believing in God, given the outcomes associated with it? What exactly is the correlation between the benefits of religion and/or the negative effects? There was a study done that was in the Journal of Religion and Health showing that people who believe in an angry,

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<sup>11</sup> (Stanford 2008)

<sup>12</sup> (Bible Hub 2015)

<sup>13</sup> (Stephen Ellis 2004)

<sup>14</sup> (Sylvia Mohr 2004)

vengeful God are more likely to suffer from social anxiety, paranoia, obsessional thinking, and compulsions.<sup>15</sup>

When it comes to religion it can be one the most common ways that people look to deal with life on life's terms. Whether it is the death of a loved one, loneliness, shame, forgiveness, and or those who have mental health issues, there have been numerous studies showing high religious involvement as it relates to these types of situations. In 2000 there were 102 studies that were identified examining this relationship finding that 79% found positive correlations with religiousness/spirituality (R/S) and 70% reported significant positive relationships between R/S and well-being. Since then there has been an outpouring of numerous studies (224) in the past 10 years.<sup>16</sup>

Religion has the ability to touch every area of our lives affecting it in some way shape, form or fashion. Some of the positive effects the religion can have can be seen in the way people cope and adapt when tragedy presents itself. It is not a secret that people tend to come to faith or return back to the faith as a result of highly stressful events. Since 2000 there have been nearly 500 quantitative studies that show religion is associated with a higher success rate of overcoming difficult and tragic situations.<sup>17</sup>

A sense of well-being and overall sense of purpose is greatly impacted by having religious involvement which in turn affects your mental health. In the past 10 years, 224 studies have been published and the percent reported significant positive relationships and well-being as a result of being involved in religion.<sup>18</sup> Alongside a sense of well-being comes a sense of expectation that something positive will happen, also known as hope. Since 2000, 29 of the 40 quantitative studies showed that 73% found greater hope as a result of a better life in this one or the next as a result of religion.<sup>19</sup>

There seems to be no debate when it comes to the religion and the effects that it has on every area of our lives. Studies have continually shown that those who engage in religious activities tend to have a more positive and confident outlook on life. This also leads to an enhanced meaning of life, helping them to define what their role is in the world. Life is defined as the physical, spiritual, and mental experiences that constitute our existence. Now let's continue to identify the areas of life that effect mental health and the benefits that religion has.

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<sup>15</sup> (Cooper-White 2014)

<sup>16</sup> (Harold Koenig 2012)301

<sup>17</sup> (Harold Koenig 2012)301

<sup>18</sup> (Harold Koenig 2012)302

<sup>19</sup> (Harold Koenig 2012)302

Often times, people who have mental illness tend to feel alone either because of shame or depression that may tell them that they do not belong. We all need somebody to talk to, so why not go to the place where people tend to congregate, such as church? A lot of times people who have mental illness tend to feel alone. According to a study that was done, the evidence showed that it was almost an even split showing no real advantage when it came to religion and loneliness, so even though a person might attend religious gatherings it could really go either way.<sup>20</sup>

Although in regards to ones esteem of themselves and how their attitude is affected by religious involvement can be enhanced, the cases that were studied found that 61 percent found a positive link to religious involvement. As this relates to depression there seems to be a higher rate of depression among the religious. However, when it came to treating it those who were not engaged in a religion tended not to recover as fast as those who did. Even more so there was a showing of lesser bouts of depression in the future if a person was more diligent in their religious practice.<sup>21</sup>

Next as it relates to other areas of mental health such as anxiety, psychotic disorders, alcohol and drug abuse there also seems to be a repeated pattern of positive effects as it relates to each of these. There was a reduction in not only the types of issues, but also people were less likely to have be readmitted into facilities, because of using religion compared to secular modalities in their treatment. This would again contribute to reaffirming the benefits of when religion is used in treating those who have mental health.

After noting the positive let us examine the negative effects that religion has when it comes to mental health. As we discussed earlier, the ups and downs that come along as a part of life creates and compiles stress. Religion can lead those who are stressed and seeking help from the everyday hurts, habits, and hang ups to become fanatical in their devotion to cope. As a result it can bring about a person putting off responsibilities creating a strain on a person's family life, causing detachment from children, friends and in some cases causing divorce, or failure to perform at a level that is necessary on the job or even in school.

It is important to not allow our thinking or self-righteousness as it relates to the word of God to put people in a box because of over interpretation or taking the word of God out of context. There are other times a person can become so self-righteous and over concerned with religious behavior that they create sins that are unwarranted, as this can cause greater depression, anxiety, and

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<sup>20</sup> (Harold Koenig 2012),303

<sup>21</sup> (Jong-ik Park 2012)

alienation. When we start to think that religious healing is the only type of healing, declining a secular type of modality of treatment can become dangerous. A delay of secular treatment because of ones belief that a miracle shall occur if they would just remain faithful, have caused cases where people have become sick and wound up dying as a result of the families religious belief that did not allow such action as calling a doctor . Since 1858, the Catholic Church has only recognized 66 healings amongst the thousands of people who have claimed that they have had a miracle, while it is important to note that in order for this to be recognized as a true healing there must not only be documentation but follow-up for 10 to 15 years ensuring that this is in fact a true healing. Amongst the 5,000 cures that were claimed before 1947, the church only recognized 57 as true miracles. Between 1947 and 2000, the international medical committee of Lord examined 1,300 claims of cures and presented 29 to the church, which they recognize 19 as miracles.<sup>22</sup>

Another negative side effect of religion on mental health is with those who have schizophrenia, acute mania or psychotic depression that is often accompanied by religious delusions. When it comes to those who have been diagnosed with schizophrenia, there tends to be a religious delusion attached (25%-39% to be exact). In cases like this, the patients may claim they hear voices from God or the devil requesting that they do things or they may report having visual hallucinations. Now clients who might have bipolar disorder can fall into a pattern of thinking that they are God or they are Jesus, the Messiah or another person of divine nature. This type of disorder can also lead to the person thinking that they had committed an unknown forgivable sin and have no way of redemption hence you may find them praying fanatically or engaging in other religious rituals in an attempt to ease their obsession.<sup>23</sup> Even scarier as this relates to mental health, patients can engage in religious self-injurious behavior taking the Bible literally for example an eye for an eye, having to stop someone from taking out their own eye for lusting.

Now that the comparisons have been made in regards to the research provided, I want to point out an obvious observation: most of the research that has supported this writing is from overseas. Suggesting that either in a western world the U.S., we don't believe an issue exists between mental health and religion or we choose to ignore it. The evidence would strongly suggest that there is in fact not only an effect but also a need for more research. Mental health greatly influences the individual who is suffering looking for relief or in other cases the religious person who has become delusional and needs to receive help that requires more than the average secular approach. In any case, we must continue to develop the research and not settle for half measures as

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<sup>22</sup> (Jong-Ik Park 2012)

<sup>23</sup> (Jong-Ik Park 2012)

these findings cannot be ignored but instead should evoke a sense of purpose to know the truth so that it shall set not just you or me but all those thirsting for the answer free; that no person with mental health suffers, due to the lack of attention of a medical professional and is willing to consider in the treatment of those inflicted because of bias or ignorance as it relates to mental health and religion.



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# The Love Commandment

as Written in the Books of Matthew and Mark

Timothy M. Madu

In the 1920's the greatest Japanese Christian and humanitarian, Toyohiko Kagawa, published a book entitled *Love: The Law of Life*. One chapter was devoted to love and the neighbor and was composed largely on reflections on his visit to Jane Addams' "Hall House" located in the poor living area of Chicago. "Settlement work" as conceived and practiced half a century ago would doubtless be an insufficient response to the unrest of our central cities in the latter half of the twentieth century. But Kagawa's comment on the motivation to and meaning of social work in his days retains, both in its simplicity of expression and in its specificity of reference, an authentic Christian word about the love ethic. "The fundamental spirit of settlement work," he wrote. "it kindness to neighbors. It is just helping a man as a neighbor because he is in trouble right beside you."<sup>1</sup>

Love is very powerful and it is something that when used, it brings peace and happiness. It is something that Jesus himself strongly urges us to do and also placed it "supreme" above the other commandments, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."<sup>2</sup> It would have seemed to be obvious that the teaching of Jesus himself must be the starting point for an investigation of the love command in earliest Christianity. But it is equally clear that the teachings of Jesus are accessible only in the traditions preserved, and interpreted in the faith documents we know as "Gospels." Therefore, it is not with "Jesus in history" but with "Jesus in the Gospels" that our study must commence, whereupon it becomes immediately apparent that each of the disciples teaches and preached and performed all manner of miracles because of their love for God first and then love for their neighbor. The simplicity and concreteness of these actions on love put them in the company of the biblical injunction to "love your neighbor as yourself," which in its formulation also deceptively simple and disturbingly concrete. This command Jesus give also is so-called the "Holiness Code" (Lev. 19:19) is one of the Greatest Commandments ascribed to Jesus (Matt. 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27) and is also employed by Paul (Rom. 13 9; Gal. 5:14).

According to both Matthew and Mark, upon being questioned, Jesus formulated the so-called "double commandment" concerning love to God and love to neighbor (Matt. 22:34-40); Mark 12:28-34). In both gospels the

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<sup>1</sup> Pinnock, Clark *Flame of Love*: Grand Rapids, MI: IVP Academic, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> King James Version (KJV) (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1995)

periscope immediately follows Jesus response to the Sadducees about resurrection and immediately precedes Jesus words about the Davidic son-ship. The point in the book of Luke does not have this formulation of the double commandment. Instead, in Luke the topic about resurrection (20:27-40) and Davidic son-ship (20:41-44) stand side by side. Luke tradition did in fact originally include the double commandment between these two periscopes is probably, however.<sup>3</sup> For the Lucan conclusion to the resurrection topic ("And in answer to him some of the scribes said, 'Teacher, you have spoken well,'" 20:39) seems to make use of the formulation with which Mark has open and concluded his account of the double commandment ("And one of the scribes, when he came up, heard them disputing, saw that he answer them well, and asked him..." 12:28); And the scribes said to Him "You answer" well, teacher," 12:32. Moreover, Luke 20:40 ("for they no longer dared any longer to ask him any question").

In Luke, the double commandment itself occurs much earlier (10:25-28), in the midst of Jesus journey to Jerusalem. Whereas in Matthew and Mark the commandment is tied at least formally to what precedes (in both cases a series of question is being addressed to Jesus, and the question about the greatest commandment is introduced by a reference to Jesus excellent fielding of other questions), in Luke such formal ties with the context are missing. Furthermore, the preceding material has been presented as Jesus private teaching to his disciples (Luke 10:23), and we are thus quite unprepared for the sudden arising of a "lawyer" with question (vs. 25). It should also be noted that in Luke the double commandment is "closely" linked with the parable of the "Good Samaritan" (10:29-37), the two together thus forming a single topic unit.

### Definition

***The LOVE commandment or greatest commandment as stated in Matthew and Mark. Definition of that LOVE in the Greek language is listed as "Agape" as originally written in the manuscript:***

*Agape (noun) and agapao (verb) and This is the "Christian love" of the Bible. It means affection, benevolence, good-will, high esteem and concern for the welfare of the one loved. It is deliberate, purposeful love rather than emotional or impulsive love. Almost all of the New Testament references to love are agapao or agape in the original Greek language. The King James Version of*

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<sup>3</sup> Hermann Binder, "Das Gleichnis vom Barmherzigen Samariter," Thz XV (1959): 176-77.

*the Bible sometimes translates agape as "charity," but charity has now taken on the meaning of assistance to the poor rather than benevolent love.<sup>4</sup>*

### **Mark's version of the Love Commandment.**

*Mark 12:29-31- And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: <sup>30</sup>And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. <sup>31</sup>And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.*

Mark's version of the commandment is the longest. There are two points at which Mark writing is extended: in vs. 29 Jesus cites the Shema (Deut. 6:4) <sup>5</sup> and in vs. 32-33 the questioner affirms Jesus' answer, repeats it, and in fact adds to it (vs. 33). The reference to Jesus responds to the Sadducees' questioning (vs. 28) is doubtless an editorial link with the preceding topic forged by the evangelist<sup>6</sup> himself.<sup>7</sup> While the question put to Jesus by the Sadducees had been formulation with hostile intent, there is no hint of hostility as the scribe puts his own question about the "chief commandment." The scribe is portrayed as coming to Jesus' response to his question (vs. 32-33) but is himself commanded by Jesus (vs. 34). The form of the story is that of the typical (rabbinic) scholastic dialogue.<sup>8</sup>

The scribe's question is simply stated and is by no means an unusual one for a Jew to ask: "Which is the first commandment?" (vs. 28). In those days, Rabbis were constantly asked to summarize the 613 commandments (365 negative, 248 positive) of the law and willingly replied, although with varying answers.<sup>9</sup> A distinctive feature of Mark's version of Jesus reply is the citation of the Shema from Deut. 6:4, the confession of faith that was repeated twice daily by the Jew and regarded as fundamental for the devotion of life. The repetition of this confession of faith in the one God by the scribe himself later in the text (vs. 32) shows that the affirmation is not just intended as an introduction to Jesus answer, but as a vital part of it. It is not without significance that in

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<sup>4</sup> Christianbiblereference.org (2010); What Does the Bible Say About Love?

<sup>5</sup> Shema Deut. 6:4 – Here O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.

<sup>6</sup> Throughout this paper I will be referring to Matthew and Mark also as "Evangelist"

<sup>7</sup> R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. John Marsh (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), P. 22.

<sup>8</sup> G. Bornkamm, "Das Doppelgebot der Liebe," *Neutestamentliche Studien*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., BZNW 21 (Berlin: A. Topelmann, 1957)

<sup>9</sup> G. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*: Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1932): 83.

Mark's perspective, affirmation of the one God who is "Lord" is inseparably a part of "the first commandment." The scribe's original question to Jesus had been, literally, concerning the "first" of all commandments. But in reply Jesus offers both a "first" (vs. 29-30) and a "second" (vs. 31) commandment. There is no attempt, explicit or implicit, to justify this, and the sequential "first-second," as well as the "than these" in vs. 31 helps give each commandment a distinct identity. In effect, then, the scribes is being told that no one commandment can be marked as "first," but that these two together (love of the one God and love of one's neighbor) constitute the essence of the law. Over my years being a Christian, I have continuously heard other Christian's minister criticize Christian social action on the grounds that the church's real business is "religious," for Jesus "first" commandment is to love God, and one's duty to love the neighbor is only secondary. But this interpretation of the Great Commandment is entirely excluded by the context here. The two commands together are set over against all other requirements of the law: "There are no other commandments greater than these" (vs. 31). The "second" commandment is not "of second importance." It is, simply, the second of two mentioned as together comprising the "first/chief" commandment about which the scribe had initially inquired. "The union of the singular 'no other commandment' and the plural 'than these' maintains the distinction between the two precepts, but puts both of them into a special category."<sup>10</sup> One may compare, for form at least, the famous dictum of Simeon the Just (3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C): "Upon three things the world standeth; upon Torah, upon Worship and upon the showing of kindness."<sup>11</sup> These items are not ranked, but listed, and as in the double commandment of Mark 12:29-31 the components are of equal and related importance.

It is noteworthy that, apart from the Synoptic formulations of the double commandment, the command of Deut. 6:5 to "love the Lord your God" is not cited by New Testament writers? In fact there is only one other Synoptic passage which speaks at all of man's love for God (Luke 11:42: the Pharisees "neglect justice and the love of God"), and it appears only rarely elsewhere in the New Testament (e.g., Rom. 8:28; 1 Cor. 2:9; 8:3; 16:22; Eph. 6:24; 1 John 4: 20-21).<sup>12</sup> Ordinarily man's proper relationship to God is described in other ways (to "believe," to "know" to "obey," etc.), so it would seem that the citation of Deut. 6:5 has its point principally if not exclusively in relation to the subsequent of Lev. 19:18 to love the neighbor as one's self. It may well be, as Asher Finkel has suggested, that this combination of text is an example of

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<sup>10</sup> G. Sweeting. (1974) *Love is the Greatest*: Moody Press, Chicago, IL

<sup>11</sup> R. Travers. *The Ethics of the Talmud: Sayings of the Fathers*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Reprinted (New York: Schocken Books, 1962).

<sup>12</sup> D. E. Nineham, *The Gospel of St. Mark*, *The Pelican Gospel Commentaries* (London: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 325.

an ancient Pharisaic hermeneutical procedure.<sup>13</sup> By the “analogy of words” two or more scriptural texts could be brought together and conjointly interpreted. Thus, because in these two texts the same word is used to command “love” for God (Deut. 6:5) and “love” for the neighbor (Lev. 19:18), the commands themselves are regarded as analogous and are combined and interpreted as one.

In Mark’s version, the effects of the scribe’s response to Jesus promulgation of the Great Commandment is to accentuate the monotheistic confession with which Jesus that begun: “[You answer] well, Teacher. In truth have you said that he is One and there is none but he” (vs. 32). As Taylor points out, in the scribe’s recapitulation of Jesus’ answer the affirmation of the one God gains independent status, so that the division is not so much between a “first” and “second” commandment (the enumeration is itself dropped in the scribe’s recapitulation) as it is between the Shema on the one hand (vs. 32) and the Great Commandment on the other (vs. 33).<sup>14</sup> In formulating Jesus answer the scribe proceeds to introduces an entirely new element. The Great commandment is now deliberately and emphatically assessed as “much more [important] than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices” (vs. 33). In fact, then, the original formulation has been restated in such a way as to interpret and extend its meaning. This interpretation is in turn approved by Jesus who, according to the evangelist, judges the scribe to have spoken “wisely” and to be close to the kingdom of God (vs. 34.)<sup>15</sup> It should now be clear that Mark’s version of the Great Commandment has its “own” special point and meaning, revealed best in the scribe’s response which is in turn given Jesus’ own imprimatur in the closing verse of the passage.

Mark’s version of the Great commandment has been formulated for apologetic purposes. Its usefulness in early Christian missionary preaching is evident: There is One God. You must love him and your neighbor. Obedience to his will is more important than the performance of cultic ritual. Except for Mark’s quoting of Old Testament scriptures introduced in verse 28 and concluding in verse 34, neither the content nor the style of this passage exhibits peculiarly Mark’s elements. “The probability is that this particular adaption and application of the double commandment were achieved already before Mark and taken over by him.”<sup>16</sup> This tradition as we have it in the book of Mark

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<sup>13</sup> A. Finkel. *The Pharisees and the Teacher of Nazareth. A Study of Their Background, Their Halachic and Midrashic Teachings, the Similarities and Differences*, IV (1964): p. 174.

<sup>14</sup> V. Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1952), pp. 489-90.

<sup>15</sup> Taylor, p. 86

<sup>16</sup> Sweeting, p. 103

focuses neither upon the meaning of love nor upon the meaning of who the neighbor is or who is to be loved. Nor do we have here any special concern for emphasizing or defining the relationship between love for God and love for neighbor. What is emphasized, doubtless for apologetic-missionary purpose, is the necessary connection between belief in the one God and obedience to the moral law.

### **Matthew's version of the Love Commandment**

*Matthew 22:35-40 - <sup>35</sup> Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, <sup>36</sup> Master, which is the great commandment in the law? <sup>37</sup> Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the first and great commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. <sup>40</sup> On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (KJV)*

There are “several” notable difference between Mark and Matthew version of the Greatest Commandment. First, in Matthew the questioner is not described as “one of the scribes” but as a “lawyer” from among the Pharisees (Matt. 22:35). His question is presented to Jesus as a challenge, indeed with hostile intent: “and [he] asked a question... in order to test him in front of many people” (vs. 35). Also in Matthew the question itself is differently formulated. The lawyer asks not for the “first” (i.e. the “chief”) commandment, but for the “great” commandment, and in so doing specific mention is made of the law: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?” (vs. 36). Not once is there direct reference to “the law” in Mark version (perhaps due to the apologetic intention of the tradition Mark employs). Jesus response to his questioner also varies in Matthew: no use is made of Deut. 6:4 (the confession that God is one), Mark’s fourth phrase describing the proper love of God (“with all your strength,” Mark 12:30) is not represented.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps most significant is the apparent concern in Matthew’s version to emphasize the relatedness of the two commands to love God and the neighbor (vs. 38-39). To love God is underscored as the “great and first commandment,” but then the “second” is said to be “like” it, which quite apparently means equal to it in importance. Moreover, in summary, Matthew’s version links the two commandments together as those upon which “all the law and the prophet depend” (vs. 40). Finally in contrast to Mark the questioner does not respond to Jesus and is not commended by him, and there is no distinction drawn here between the double commandment and the law. Whereas Mark’s version is correctly described as a “scholastic dialog,” Matthew’s falls clearly into the

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<sup>17</sup> The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament, American ed. [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968], p.75.



category of a “controversy story”, a form which would actually fit Mark’s context better than the form Mark has.<sup>18</sup>

The evangelist’s own editorial hand is more often apparent in Matthew than in Mark, and an examination of his use of the traditional material helps to show what kind of “controversy” is implicit in Matthew version. In Matthew as in Mark the introductory formulation is obviously editorial. The mention of Pharisees (vs. 34) and of the hostility of the questioner toward Jesus (vs. 35) help to set the stage for the polemic which follows in chapter 23.<sup>19</sup> The evangelist’s redaction is also and most obviously presented at the conclusion. There is nothing in Matthew corresponding to the scribe’s responds to and commendation by Jesus in Mark. But neither is there anything in Matthew corresponding to Mark editorial conclusion to the whole scene, “And no longer did anyone dare ask him a question” (Mark 12:34). Instead, Matthew’s version concludes with a comment about the significance of the double commandment, “Everything in the Law and the prophet’s hangs on these two commandments” (vs. 40). Although this comment is ascribed to Jesus, it contains the characteristically Matthew conception of “the law and the prophets,” present also in Matt. 5:17 (“Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets,”) and, with reference to the “Golden Rule,” in 7:12 (“for this is the law and the prophets,”).<sup>20</sup>

From this Matthew scripture on the Great Commandment it may be seen in what sense the evangelist understands the lawyer’s question to have been posted as a challenge to Jesus. The real question on the lawyer’s “hidden agenda” is whether Jesus accepts all the statutes of the Torah as of equal importance. Jesus singling out of two commandments as “great” is interpreted by Matthew (vs. 40) as a negative response, whereby Jesus is set over against Judaism.<sup>21</sup> In contrast with both Mark and Luke, this Matthew version contains no hint of agreement or accord between Jesus and his questioner on the point at issue, which is: the right interpretation of the law.

According to Taylor, in Matthew, then, and in clear contrast to Mark, there is an emphasis upon the double commandment itself and upon its importance as the key to the right interpretation of the whole law. The abruptness of Mark’s two commandments when one had made clear beyond question that the “second” is of the same rank as the first, is “like it” (vs. 39).<sup>22</sup> Matthew’s

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<sup>18</sup> Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, p. 485.

<sup>19</sup> W. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, ICC (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1907), p. 240.

<sup>20</sup> Allen, p. 257

<sup>21</sup> G. Barth, “Matthew’s Understanding of the Law,” *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, by G. Bornkamm (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), p. 78.

<sup>22</sup> Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, p. 487

understanding of the meaning of the double commandment is given, as seen, in the comments in vs. 40: it is the essence of the law and therefore the key to its meaning. This evangelist is fond of summaries of the law's essence, and among these can be listed his use of the "Golden Rule" (7:12), of scriptural citations (Hos. 6:6 cited in 9:13 and 12:7; and perhaps Mic. 6:8 lies behind the formulation of 23:33), and of a dominical epigram (9:13).<sup>23</sup> But for Matthew the most important optimization of the law is clearly the double commandment to love God and the neighbor.<sup>24</sup>

What precisely does it mean to say the whole law and the prophets "hang" or "depend" on the two commandments of Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18? The equivalent Hebrew idiom as employed by the rabbis meant that from a given scriptural passage a "Halakah" or general moral principle could be derived exegetically.<sup>25</sup> Matthew appears to be making the point that from the two key commandments identified by Jesus all the other statutes of the law can be deduced, that these two contain all the others. But, as Gerhard Barth observes, "if this were the evangelist meaning, there would be no reason for the controversial posture that both the lawyer's question and the abrupt ending of the test presuppose."<sup>26</sup> Considerable force would be drained from the emphasis on these two commandments constituting what is "great" and "first" in the law. For Matthew, it would appear, these two commandments do not just contain the law, but constitute it, or better, provide the decisive word about its meaning and thus enable its correct interpretation.

### **The Love Commandment and the Good Samaritan**

Luke also give an illustration of the love commandment, as in Matthew, Luke tells of a lawyer who question Jesus and also addressed him as teacher and seeks to "test" him (vs. 25). The lawyer's question however, read differently in Luke, for he makes no request concerning the "chief" or "great" commandment (as in Mark and Matthew respectively). Instead his question is: "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" The question "What shall I do...?" is here formulated in a distinctively Lucan way presented also in 18:18 where Matthew and Mark used a different Greek formulation.<sup>27</sup> Indeed the "ruler's" question in 18:18 is exactly that of the lawyer in 10:25, and the two pericopes may be compared to good advantage. It is clear that "inheriting eternal life" (vs. 18, 30) is but another expression for what that story elsewhere terms "entering the kingdom of God" (vs. 24, 25,29) and being "saved" (vs.

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<sup>23</sup> Bornkamm, p. 93.

<sup>24</sup> Barth, p. 77.

<sup>25</sup> Barth, P 83.

<sup>26</sup> Barth, p. 88

<sup>27</sup> Schnackenburg, p. 47

26). Again Jesus responds to the questioner for eternal life is a complete reflection of the “love” commandment given in Matthew and Mark and then joined the Good Samaritan parable as a supporting scenario to paint a more clear and vivid understanding of his teaching. Jesus told the lawyer “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself” (vs. 25-37). Loving “God” and loving “neighbor” is greatest commandment that Jesus was trying to prove to the questioner and is even needed to enter into the Kingdom. In support of Jesus response, he told of a parable of love to neighbor being demonstrated with the story of the Good Samaritan. This is a perfect example of love being exercise in a selfless and unselfish way and clearly displaying love for a neighbor. Luke 10:25-37, the parable of the Good Samaritan is told by Jesus and is only written in the gospel of Luke. Here is the parable: *A man who was a Jew and were traveling from one location to the other had an encounter with robbers along his journey. He was stripped of his clothing, robbed, beaten and left on the side of the road for dead. According to Luke, a priest and also a Levite come by and neither offers any aid to the victim but then eventually a Samaritan came and rendered aid. Note, at the point of time, Jews and Samaritans was not corresponding with each other due to certain religious and political conflicts between both groups.*<sup>28</sup>

The love commandment tells of loving your neighbor which defiantly means to also love your enemies. One’s enemies is his neighbor. The command to love one’s enemies stands in Matthew’s Gospel as the last of the six antitheses in the “Sermon on the Mount” and reaches its climax in the exhortation to imitate God in being “perfect.”<sup>43</sup> *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor<sup>44</sup> and hate your enemy.’”<sup>44</sup> But I say to you, love your enemies....(Matt.5:43).* There are no parallels to this material in Mark, but there are in Luke. Here, as in the Great Commandment, we can see Matthews’s editorial formulation and adaptation of traditional material. There is, for instance, widespread scholarly agreement that this sixth antithesis at least (and perhaps the whole series) has been constructed by the evangelist.<sup>29</sup> The first half of the scripture makes use of Lev. 19:18, but with two differences from the citation of that verse in the Great Commandment. First, the “as yourself” is omitted. Second, and more importantly, the words, “and shall hate your enemy” are added as if they, too, stood in the Old Testament text. But according to Seitz, “they do not stand in Lev. 19:18, nor anywhere else in the Old Testament.”<sup>30</sup> According to the point of Matt. 5:43-44 would be

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<sup>28</sup> The Rift Between Jews and Samaritans (2009). Ask a Wise Man. American-catholic.org

<sup>29</sup> Bultmann, p. 148

<sup>30</sup> O. J. Seitz, “Love your Enemies, London: Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, 1962.

that the command to love the neighbor may be and usually is understood (“heard,” vs. 43) to imply that one “hates [the] enemy,” but other texts in this instance, the command to perfection quoted in vs. 48 (cf. Lev. 19:2 and Deut. 18:13) prove that the real meaning is something different.<sup>31</sup>

### **A Reflection of the Love commandment in Apostle Paul’s Writings**

There is no letter from Apostle Paul where the term “love” (almost always agape) does not appear and in which exhortations to love do not figure prominently. It is significantly, however, that the Great Commandment as such is not conveyed by Paul, and that his love ethic is not specifically or explicitly oriented in terms of Jesus own teachings. The love commandment can be clearly seen through the teachings of the Apostle and even through his writings. Paul writings to the Corinthians identify love not as the greatest, chief or first commandment, but as the “Greatest Gift.”

*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.<sup>2</sup> And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.<sup>3</sup> And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned,<sup>[a]</sup> but have not love, it profits me nothing.*

*<sup>4</sup> Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; <sup>5</sup> does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; <sup>6</sup> does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; <sup>7</sup> bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.<sup>32</sup>*

*<sup>8</sup> Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. <sup>9</sup> For we know in part and we prophesy in part. <sup>10</sup> But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.*

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Matthew and Mark view the love command as the key to the law’s meaning and the essential content of the “higher righteousness” which distinguishes Jesus followers. Luke is especially concerned to contrast the Christian love imperative with the ethics of reciprocity extolled in the Hellenistic world, particularly stresses the need for love to find expression in

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<sup>31</sup> G. Friedlander. *The Jewish Source of the Sermon on the Mount*, New York, NY: KTAV Reprints, 1969.

<sup>32</sup> 1 Corinthians 13 1-9, (NKJV)

concrete deeds of mercy and compassion. In reflection to Jesus teachings, the love commandment should be an instrumental part of the Christian life that is commonly practiced. The love command was central to Jesus own message and mission. “Whether or not the Great Commandment as such was Jesus own formulation, the exhortations to love God and one’s neighbor whom it vitally coordinates and urgently presents are the keeping with what even the most cautious scholars agree to be most characteristic of Jesus teaching.”<sup>33</sup> The love commandment is so important that according to Jesus, all the laws and prophets can hang on them. It is a guideline that cannot be forsaken nor taken lightly. The love that Jesus commanded (Matt. 22:34-40); Mark 12:28-34), being directly towards “neighbor” or “enemy” is understood in just one way. It does not matter the condition, indifference or the personality, love towards neighbor (anyone) is mandated by Jesus himself. True love to God (the first commandment) will allow one to automatically pursue love towards their neighbor.

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<sup>33</sup> Taylor, p. 139

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