

Our Relationship with God in 2018: Estranged or Intimate?

A Study of the Character of God as He has Revealed Himself vs.
the Substitute Idols of our Neo-Pagan Culture

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Lesson 5: Sunday Evening, 2 Sep

Introduction & Review

Review of Satan's endlessly repeated lies that deny that special revelation ever occurred, and that fallen man is capable of defining good and evil and bringing about a just society on earth

[Slide 41 to summarize man's five deep needs supplied by a relationship with God with five of His attributes so far studied]

God Alone has a Demonstrated PERFECT LOVE

1. Must begin with special revelation of His love found throughout His historic revelation. Two themes of revelation show His love. First there is the asymmetry in His blessing and cursing [Slide 42 citing verses that speak of His greater willingness to bless than to curse—Gen 12:3; Ex 20:5–6; Matt 25:41—note the numerical and verb tense differences.] Second there is the historically demonstrated act of His love through the Son [Slide 43 citing verses that center on Christ laying down His life before man sought Him—Rom 5:8; 1 John 3:16; 4:10, 19] God's love eternally existed within the three Persons of the Trinity—His love did not need a finite created object “outside of God” for it to be exercised as would be the case with a solitary personal god such as the Muslim Allah. [Slide 44 citing verses that speak of this intra-Trinity love—John 15:9–10; 17:26; 15:20–23]
2. Learn our finite analog to His love because we are made “in His image.” We experience in varying degrees giving and receiving love. Our bodies respond at deep emotional levels (which make us vulnerable to seeking these feelings apart from loving acts toward others).
3. Unbelief/Pagan perversions & idols of love try to create some sort of substitute for God's love. At least three examples exist: (1) re-invent “love” according to the 19th century Romantic movement to be focused entirely upon increasing pleasurable feelings; (2) re-define God's love by separating it from His righteousness and justice to produce a sort of “Santa Claus” theology; and (3) focus inward (narcissism) or focus outward in a frantic search for someone to fill one's need to be loved (which leads to over-dependence that always results in disappointment).
4. Concluding blessings to us
 - Calming empowerment to respond to extreme persecution with a love that prays for the persecutors to be saved, as frequently occurs with Christian martyrs such as Jesus and Stephen [Slide 45 citing the situation in Eritrea where a man whose wife was tortured to death said, “I don't hate [the Isaias Afwerki administration] because they tortured my wife. They didn't know what they were doing. I would like all Christians in the world to pray that our government will accept the gospel.”]
 - My sense of value becomes less dependent upon what others think of me.
 - Incentivizes thankfulness and confidence that God wants to get me in shape for dwelling with Him in eternity
 - Incentivizes me to reach out to others with the gospel as God has reached out to me